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New York

President:	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Martins
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. McCully
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Barro
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: Today, I report to the Security Council for the last time on the situation in the Middle East. It saddens me that my last such briefing brings no sense of optimism for the future.

Some may ask why, given all the crises in the region, I have chosen to address the Council on the question of Palestine. To them, I say that while the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not the cause of the wars in the Middle East, its resolution can create momentum for peace throughout the region. In 1947, on the basis of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), the world recognized the two-State solution and called for the emergence of independent Arab and Jewish States. On 14 May 1948, the State of Israel was born. Almost seven decades later, the world still awaits the birth of the Palestinian State.

As the Security Council has made clear, Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have been under military occupation since 1967. These lands comprise the future Palestinian State, ultimately to be agreed by the parties through direct negotiations. History has shown that peace and security can be built only on the basis of respect and mutual acceptance. The right of the Jewish people to have a State does not negate the right of the Palestinian people to statehood.

Yet Palestinian frustration and grievances are growing under the weight of nearly half a century of humiliating occupation. Ten years ago, the majority of both peoples believed in the two-State solution; today, that majority is unravelling. Leaders on both sides increasingly speak to their ever more radicalized constituencies, rather than to each other. The expanding Israeli settlement enterprise and an ever-more entrenched status quo is preventing Palestinian development and locking in Gaza. Some Israeli politicians increasingly call for the so-called full annexation of the West Bank. Gaza and the West Bank remain politically divided, and Palestinian factions fail to make the compromises necessary for national unity. Israelis feel that there is no end in sight to terrorism, as incitement and calls for Israel's obliteration continue unchallenged by Palestinian leaders.

The framework for peace remains unchanged — the establishment of two States, on the basis of the principle of land for peace and a just and comprehensive regional peace consistent with relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as with existing agreements signed between the parties. As I took office 10 years ago, the Middle East was still recovering from the years of the second Palestinian uprising and the war between Israel and Hizbullah in 2006. The reaffirmation by the League of Arab States of the Arab Peace Initiative and the convening of the Annapolis conference in 2007 brought some hope.

Despite early optimism, attempts to reach a final resolution failed to make headway and were upended with the eruption of conflict in Gaza in December 2008. Further attempts at peace in 2010 and 2013 were equally eclipsed by renewed hostilities. The summer of 2014 saw the most devastating conflict in Gaza to date. During the height of the fighting, I traveled to the region and met with regional and international partners, as well as with the leadership in Israel and Palestine, to push for a ceasefire. An agreement, sadly, came too slowly for those who paid a heavy price during those 50 days of horror. I said then and I continue to insist that without addressing the deeper causes of this conflict, such cycles of escalation will persist.

Yet another troubling measure of the current state of play is that, during my tenure, the Security Council has adopted only two resolutions on the Middle East peace process, the most recent almost eight years ago.

We are fast approaching a precipice as a direct result of the actions of those seeking to destroy the prospects for peace. But there is a way out of this deadlock — by both sides implementing the recommendations in the recent report of the Middle East Quartet. That would demonstrate that Israelis and Palestinians are serious about building trust and laying the foundations for meaningful negotiations that would end the occupation based on the 1967 lines, establish a viable, independent Palestinian State, and resolve all final status issues.

But there are also major obstacles. As I have consistently stated, Israel's settlement activity beyond the 1967 line is in flagrant violation of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Settlements eat away at the land meant for a future Palestinian State. Over the past decade, the number of Israelis living in settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has increased by some 30 per cent to about 600,000 people. A bill currently being debated in the Israeli legislature risks the regularization of more than 50 outposts and thousands of housing units built on private Palestinian land in the West Bank, which would be a clear violation of international law. If adopted, this legislation would for the first time apply Israeli law on the status of Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank. I strongly urge legislators to reconsider advancing the bill, which would have negative legal consequences for Israel and substantially diminish the chances for Arab-Israeli peace.

Bold steps by Israel to empower the Palestinian Authority, based on the transition envisioned in previous agreements, could bring benefits to the Palestinian people and increase Israeli security. Progress in this area, however, will be difficult unless the Palestinian authorities take brave and concrete steps to address incitement and violence. Acts and statements that glorify terror are unacceptable. I have repeatedly and strongly denounced incitement and all acts of terror. Stabbings, vehicle rammings and other attacks by Palestinians do nothing to advance their dream of statehood.

Israel must also understand that continued occupation and heavy-handed security responses — including the possible excessive use of force and the highly restrictive closure policy in Gaza — play into the hands of extremists. These actions risk undermining moderate voices, and further deepening the gulf between the two sides. I have also decried the practice of administrative detention and ill-treatment in detention by Israeli and Palestinian authorities alike. Similarly, executions of prisoners by Hamas in Gaza are absolutely unacceptable, and I continue to speak out against constraints on freedom of expression by Israeli and the Palestinian authorities, including against human rights defenders.

The absence of Palestinian unity throughout the occupied territory presents an obstacle to the two-State solution. The failure to organize Palestinian general elections has remained one of the clearest signs of this disunity and of the fragile Palestinian democratic process. The divisions between the West Bank and Gaza can be overcome only with the formation of a single, legitimate and inclusive Palestinian Government, on the basis of Palestine Liberation Organization principles. We must urge a renewal of the democratic legitimacy of Palestinian leadership and institutions and ensure that they represent all Palestinians. It is unacceptable that Hamas still boasts an anti-Semitic Charter that aspires to the obliteration of Israel. Hamas must once and for all renounce the use of violence and recognize the right of Israel to exist alongside a Palestinian State, in accordance with all relevant Security Council resolutions and previous agreements between the parties.

Over the past 10 years, the Palestinian Authority has made strides in building its institutions. In 2011, these achievements were recognized by the international community as being well positioned for establishment of a State. Palestine received non-member observer State status in 2012, and I witnessed, alongside President Abbas, the raising of the Palestinian flag for the first time at the United Nations just last year. Still, Palestine's State-building and democratic governance aspirations continue to be undermined by the occupation and the lack of Palestinian national unity.

The centrality of the challenges facing Gaza cannot be overstated. Indiscriminate rocket fire by Hamas towards Israel for a decade has convinced many Israelis that there is no hope for peace. After three brutal conflicts, Israel's crippling closures and a decade-long political divide have left 2 million Palestinians trapped in a humanitarian tragedy, without hope for a political horizon. I have witnessed this devastation on my four trips to Gaza. I must warn, as I have repeatedly stated, that Gaza is a tinder box. It is almost certain to explode unless movement and access restrictions are lifted and humanitarian needs are addressed; unless rocket attacks, tunnel construction and smuggling stop; and unless progress is made towards establishing a Palestinian State, with Gaza as an integral and peaceful part.

I also want to take this opportunity to commend the efforts of United Nations colleagues working with such diligence and dedication to promote peace and prevent yet more violence. Let me begin by honouring the 24 United Nations staff members based in the occupied Palestinian territory who have been killed in the line of duty during my tenure. Their sacrifices shall never be forgotten. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East provides a much-needed element of stability for 5.3 million Palestine

refugees across the region. It continues to face serious financial challenges. I urge Member States to honour their commitment and increase their contributions to the Agency.

The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process has been instrumental in bridging differences between all sides, facilitating negotiations and engaging with the region and international partners. The United Nations country team is working under difficult circumstances to provide relief to vulnerable Palestinians and to help build the institutions and policies of a future independent Palestinian State.

During the past 10 years, I have argued that we must never accept bias against Israel within United Nations bodies. Decades of political maneuverings have created a disproportionate volume of resolutions, reports and conferences criticizing Israel. In many cases, rather than helping the Palestinian cause, that reality has hampered the ability of the United Nations to fulfil its role effectively. At the same time, Israel must realize that the reality in which a democratic State governed by the rule of law keeps the Palestinian people under military occupation will continue to generate criticism and calls for accountability.

As we look to the future, I call on the Security Council to reaffirm without reservations that there is no alternative to the two-State solution. The status quo entrenches a one-State reality of perpetual occupation and conflict. We must not give up on the right of Palestine to exist, just as we must protect the right of Israel to exist in peace and security with its neighbours.

I urge the Council to explore the vast potential of incentives and begin immediately to develop, in consultation with the parties, an agreed framework for advancing a final resolution to the conflict on the basis of direct negotiations. The upcoming conference in France could be an opportunity to begin that discussion.

The Arab Peace Initiative presents a chance to develop a comprehensive settlement of the conflict. But there cannot be sustainable peace between Israelis and Arabs without progress towards Palestinian statehood.

Ten years ago, my predecessor, Kofi Annan, called for a revitalized Middle East Quartet, working closely with international and regional partners, to facilitate and sustain direct negotiations. I fully believe that architecture remains critical.

Since becoming Secretary-General, I have visited the region 11 times, including during periods of war. For 10 years, I pressed Israelis and Palestinians to start believing in a common future, bound by their undeniable historic, religious and national connections to the land. Those aspirations have not been fulfilled. I will continue to hope that the majority of Israelis and Palestinians are tired of the tug-of-war over historical narratives.

But hope alone will not end the occupation, or rid the Palestinian and Israeli peoples of their legitimate fears. There must be a major shift to courageous and concrete action by the parties that enables meaningful negotiations. The United Nations will continue to assist that process.

Ultimately, it is up to Israelis and Palestinians to make peace — we cannot do it for them. They must rebuild trust in each other as the only way to address the fears and suspicions that have led to the deep polarization we see today. At the same time, we all can — and must — contribute to building trust, so sorely needed in the Middle East and the world today. That work must begin now, before it is too late.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. McCully (New Zealand): The situation in Syria is bleak. Aleppo has fallen. The fate of tens of thousands of civilians is unclear. Despite the strong calls from members of the Security Council and others, civilians continue to suffer.

New Zealand has used strong words in this Chamber to describe the actions of Russia, and we stand by them. Indeed, Russia, Iran and the Syrian Government bear much of the responsibility to ensure the protection of civilians. They must allow the United Nations to do its job to get aid to those who need it and to ensure the safety of those who stay and those who wish to leave.

The Security Council will meet behind closed doors shortly to talk about how the United Nations might get more involved in eastern Aleppo. To date the Security Council has been unable to meet its responsibilities. Unless that is going to change, it is our view that an emergency special session of the General Assembly is an appropriate next step.

In thanking His Excellency the Secretary-General for his final briefing on the Middle East it is difficult not to be struck by the depressing familiarity of much of what he has imparted: a continuation of incitement and violence against ordinary Israelis and Palestinians and a continuation of the settlements programme, which undermines the prospect of a viable Palestine and challenges the credibility of any commitment to the two-State solution.

In listening to today's briefing and to recent briefings by the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator it is difficult to understand how the Council can be silent when the space for a two-State solution is being so clearly undermined. Since 1947, the Council and the international community have embraced the notion of two States living peacefully side by side as the only acceptable basis for resolution of this issue — as reinforced in Oslo and Madrid and in a number of Security Council resolutions. But we have been told in words of one syllable that developments taking place on the ground now threaten the viability of the two-State solution and that the people on the ground are losing hope in the two-State solution, with all of the consequences that follow.

Since the previous briefing to the Council (see S/PV.7820) we have seen the situation compounded by legislation before the Knesset that could lead to the legalization of settlements and outposts, including on privately owned Palestinian land. Since the last briefing we have seen opportunities missed to advance Palestinian reconciliation.

In the past we have participated in these debates and expressed frustration with the challenges and shortcomings from all sides, but also expressed optimism that we would somehow see parties find their way back to the negotiating table. That has been difficult, but we are now moving beyond difficult. We are now moving into a space in which the plain facts are telling us that the forces currently in play will irretrievably undermine the prospect of two States living peacefully side by side.

It is difficult to see the legislation now before by the Knesset as other than a direct challenge to the notion of a two-State solution and a direct challenge to the resolutions previously adopted by the Council.

Where does that leave the Council? It is eight years since the Council last adopted a resolution on this question. Over that time a good number of reasons have been advanced as to why further Council pronouncements might be counterproductive or premature. But when the Secretary-General and his representatives tell the Council that not only are people on the ground losing hope in the two-State solution but that the facts on the ground are being altered to render a two-State solution unviable, it seems to me that the Council must either reassert, on behalf of the international community, a firm commitment to the two-State solution or it should start to turn its attention to its responsibilities in the event there is one State not two. A one-State future clearly takes us into territory that no friend of Israel wishes to contemplate.

My country has been engaging with fellow Council members on the type of draft text that would reassert the two-State solution and call clearly for a halt to the violence and the settlements, which threaten to undermine this process. We very much welcome the advice that Arab colleagues are working on text for this purpose.

It is time for us, the collective membership of the Council, to stop being bystanders and act as the custodians of the two-State solution that we should be.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I want to begin by welcoming the Secretary-General's briefing, as this will probably be his last public meeting on the issue. I want to thank him for his unflinching activism on the Middle East peace process. It has been a difficult and, at most times, frustrating portfolio, but he has not wavered in his resolve to bring a conclusion to what is one of the longest-running issues on the Council's agenda. I agree with every word that he said in his briefing just now. But it is perhaps with his successor in mind that I want to talk today. He faces a challenge on which we, in the broadest possible sense, have failed for over 60 years.

So, what can we do, as members of the Security Council, to make sure that the ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations does not have to endure the frustrations of his predecessors? What can we do together to ensure that the people of Israel and Palestine enjoy decades of peace ahead rather than relapse into more decades of division and hatred? I want to focus on three issues where our activism is needed most: illegal settlements, Gaza, and incitement and violence.

The United Kingdom's position on settlements is clear. It is a position shared by all of us around the table, I think. The settlements are illegal under international law and take us further away from the two-State

solution that we all want to see. Despite the findings of the Middle East Quartet report this year, the situation has only gotten worse. As the Foreign Minister of New Zealand said, we are especially concerned by the land regulation bill in the Knesset, which would retroactively legalize settlement outposts in the West Bank. Should that proposal go ahead, it would be a serious blow to the prospects for a two-State solution. It would pave the way for an exponential rise in settlements deep in the West Bank and create more grievances, hopelessness and anger among Palestinians. The United Kingdom regularly raises the issue of settlements with Israel, at all levels. The Foreign Secretary raised it when he met Prime Minister Netanyahu on 30 September. But we should also use the voice of the Council to make that call, to urge Israel to cease its policy of settlement expansion so that that grave barrier to peace can be lifted.

Turning to Gaza, it is clear that there is a real risk of a return to conflict. As we saw in October, rocket attacks have continued, as have the Israeli responses. We should speak loudly and clearly in the Chamber. Terrorist groups in Gaza must permanently end rocket fire and other attacks against Israel. But the woes of Gaza go beyond the unacceptable acts of those groups. It is estimated that 90 per cent of Gaza's water is not fit even for agricultural use, and that Gaza continues to have the highest unemployment rates in the world. Some progress is being made — education and health facilities have now largely been rebuilt — but reconstruction is far from complete. Efforts need to focus on house rebuilding and reviving the economy, stimulating exports and creating jobs. So we encourage the Israeli authorities to improve Gazans' access to clean water and to improve the flow of the necessary construction materials into Gaza, such as concrete. In tandem with that, let us recognize that our support is needed too. Donors must honour their commitments made at the International Cairo Conference on Palestine for Gaza Reconstruction. Too many are still outstanding. The United Kingdom stands ready to play its part.

Turning to my third point, we are pleased to see that the levels of violence have dropped in recent months, but again there is much for both parties to do to de-escalate tensions and prevent incitement. We cannot underestimate just how corrosive racist, anti-Semitic and hateful language is in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Together, we must deplore incitement on all sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including any comments that stir up hatred and prejudice. Sadly, such hatred is not limited to words alone. We are appalled by terrorist attacks against Israeli citizens. We are appalled at the violence committed by extremist settlers against Palestinians. We unequivocally condemn all such incidents.

Before I give up the floor, I recognize that it will take more than the Council's words to finally make progress. We also need to work with partners in the region and internationally to produce improvements on the ground and build trust between the parties, if we are to secure progress towards meaningful negotiations. With that in mind, it is incumbent upon the Council to take appropriate action in support of those efforts. We believe that there is clear merit in a Council resolution that commands the full support of the Chamber. We will judge any proposal that emerges on its merits and on whether it supports progress towards peace, but there is a great deal that we can all agree on, and I hope that we can make progress towards a lasting peace in the days and weeks ahead.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We note with regret that the situation in the Middle East and North Africa continues to be tense and explosive. Over the past few years the situation in the Israeli-Palestinian track has continually worsened. Negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians have been de facto frozen. After the completion in April 2014 — without any tangible results — of a nine-month round of Israeli-Palestinian contacts under the auspices of the United States, the situation in the Middle East process has become significantly worse, as evidenced by regular clashes in the West Bank, outbreaks of violence from which peaceful Palestinian and Israeli civilians suffer, and violations of the ceasefire in Gaza.

We strongly and unconditionally condemn any terrorist activities, which stoke an already tense atmosphere in the region. We must put an end to violence. We are very worried about unilateral actions by Israel creating irreversible facts on the ground. The Israeli Government, in spite of the unequivocal condemnation of the international community, continues to build settlements and expand them in the occupied territories, expropriating land in the West Bank and destroying Palestinian homes. All of those actions undermine the prospects for a two-State solution, to which there is no alternative, as recognized by participants to the conflict and the international community, as a whole.

Russia, as a member of the Middle East Quartet of international mediators, is trying to reanimate the negotiations and re-establish a political horizon in the peace process. We note the report of the Quartet, published on 1 July, on the status of the peace process, and see it as a consolidated form of a message from the international community. We are convinced that a good-faith implementation by the parties of the recommendations contained in that report would contribute to improving the situation and overcoming mutual distrust.

One of the main obstacles to resuming the peace process is the division within the Palestinian ranks. In the future, we intend to continue our efforts to reestablish Palestinian unity, based on the political platform of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Arab Peace Initiative.

We are particularly concerned about the situation in Gaza. The humanitarian situation there is very severe. That means that Palestinians living in Gaza cannot look forward to any sort of future, which contributes to their radicalization. It plays into the hands of the extremists. We share the views of the international community on the need to put an end to the embargo imposed on Gaza as soon as possible.

Next year will mark 50 years since the adoption of resolution 242 (1967), one of the foundational documents of the legal basis for the Middle East peace process. We note with regret that, half a century later, the root causes of that protracted and chronic conflict have not been dealt with and that prospects for a peace settlement are very dim. In the context of the conflicts all over the Middle East, the situation could lead to the worst possible consequences.

The continuous turmoil and upheaval that began six years ago, and was hastily and naïvely called the "Arab Spring", has created massive unresolved problems. Yemen and Libya, which were often touted as models of the democratization process, are still suffering from bloodshed and power struggles. There is a grave situation in Iraq, and the conflict in Syria has reached tragic proportions. The senseless and shortsighted actions of certain countries, characterized by interference in internal affairs and attempts to change rogue regimes in order to impose their recipes for democracy without taking into account the historic, cultural and religious specificities of Middle East States, as well as the direct involvement of those States, have led to the emergence of a large area of chaos and anarchy.

Of course, terrorists from Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Jabhat al-Nusrah, Al-Qaida and affiliated groups have taken advantage of that situation. Overall, in a whole range of countries in the region, State institutions have been destroyed and humanitarian socioeconomic problems have become severe, which has provoked an unprecedented wave of migration. From the very beginning of the Syrian crisis, Russia has consistently advocated its peaceful resolution, while respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. We are convinced that there is no alternative to a political solution, based on an inclusive inter-Syrian dialogue, while at the same time ensuring the cessation of hostilities, increasing humanitarian access and continuing the fight against terrorism.

It is precisely that complex position that is enshrined in the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/522, annex), in Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2254 (2015), and in the corresponding decisions of the International Syria Support Group. Thanks to the actions of the Russian Air Force, we managed to prevent terrorists from seizing Damascus, undermine the military and economic potential of the terrorist groups, and liberate large swathes of territory. In addition, we are providing assistance in establishing dialogue between the Government of Syria and the representatives of the internal and external Syrian opposition with a view to finding a common Syrian consensus on a political and diplomatic settlement of the crisis.

The Russian Federation continues to make every effort to de-escalate tensions and resolve the most acute humanitarian problems in Syria, especially in Aleppo, where military activities are ending and the withdrawal of fighters and their families from the eastern part of the city is continuing. At the same time, large-scale humanitarian and medical assistance is being provided to the Syrian population affected by the conflict. Over the past few days, the main flow of Russian humanitarian aid has been directed to Aleppo. We believe that the most urgent task now is the comprehensive end of military activity and the resumption of inter-Syrian negotiations. Damascus has more than once confirmed its readiness to take part in such negotiations.

In Iraq, the violent confrontation and struggle against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

is continuing. After terrible losses and defeats, the Iraqi forces have managed to regain control over the strategically important cities of Ramadi and Fallujah. On 17 October, with the assistance of the so-called anti-ISIL coalition, the military operation to liberate the main stronghold of terrorism in the country, Mosul, began. As we understand, it is still premature to speak of significant victories. Meanwhile, during the two-month campaign, the humanitarian situation has seriously deteriorated; the number of internally displaced persons exceeds 90,000 and more than 700,000 are in need of urgent assistance.

The situation in Yemen and Libya is also very serious. According to international humanitarian organizations, 82 per cent of the 27 million population of Yemen require urgent humanitarian assistance, and according to the United Nations Children's Fund, every 10 minutes one Yemeni child dies from hunger.

As a result of the disintegration of Government structures and the de facto vacuum of power, Libya has become a transit point for migrants seeking to cross the sea into Europe and a breeding ground for terrorism, cross-border crime, arms smuggling and drug trafficking. Since the beginning of the year, more than 328,000 illegal immigrants have reached Europe by crossing the Mediterranean.

The situation in the Middle East and North Africa and the spread of terrorist activities beyond that region demonstrates, once again, that in today's world no single State is immune from the threat of terrorism, and no single State will be able to sit on the sidelines in an oasis of security. On that basis, we believe that the task of paramount importance is to join forces, based on the principle of the indivisibility of security, so as to combat terrorism and extremism and to form a truly universal anti-terrorist front.

Russia is not trying to reap geopolitical dividends from the geopolitical instability in the region, or to assert its influence by reformatting the Middle East region. We are in favour of decisive action to destroy ISIL and other terrorist groups, wherever they are, and we are for a speedy resolution to all crises through political and diplomatic means, in strict accordance with the principles of international law. We support concrete and effective measures for improving the humanitarian situation and the socioeconomic recovery and revival of the region. Those urgent tasks can only be tackled in the framework of active and effective international cooperation.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing. China applauds the Secretary-General's tireless efforts to advance the Middle East peace process.

The issue of Palestine lies at the heart and at the source of the larger Middle East question. Today, the situation in Palestine is dire. The peace talks between Palestine and Israel are mired in an entrenched deadlock, with violent clashes occurring continuously, together with serious humanitarian crises. In particular, Israel's continued construction of settlements has undermined the prospects of the two-State solution. The international community should feel a greater sense of urgency, take tangible actions and help bring about a comprehensive and just settlement of the Palestine issue without delay. The international community should stand behind Palestine's independent statehood and the peaceful coexistence of Palestine and Israel, which is the right way forward. Having a State of Palestine, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital and enjoying full sovereignty, is an inalienable right of the Palestinian people.

The parties concerned should steadfastly advance the peace process on the basis of the principle of land for peace, the two-State solution, the Arab Peace Initiative and the applicable Security Council resolutions. The international community should encourage Palestine and Israel to hold fast to the correct course of peace talks. Both sides should exercise maximum restraint so as to avoid any further escalation of the tensions. Israel should be the first to show good will by halting the construction of settlements and the demolition of Palestinian homes, so as to create enabling conditions for the resumption of the peace talks. The parties concerned should show vision and foresight, proceed from the fundamental long-term interests of both peoples to make a political decision, and strive to resume fruitful talks as soon as possible.

The international community should maintain its effort to lend effective support to the Middle East peace process. China supports all peace efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions between Palestine and Israel and realizing the two-State solution. We support the establishment of more effective mechanisms to help bring peace to the Middle East. We also support the idea that the Council should honour its responsibilities

and take action without delay to address positively the legitimate concerns of Palestine and the Arab States. In that process, the parties concerned should strengthen coordination with Palestine and the Arab States so as to form a synergy.

China is a staunch supporter of the just cause of the Palestinian people and is an active mediator for Palestinian-Israeli peace. As a permanent member of the Council, China stands ready to work with the rest of the international community towards a just solution to the Palestine-Israel issue and towards peace and stability in the Middle East as soon as possible.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for the particularly incisive stocktaking that he has just shared with us after 10 years of managing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also for his unremitting commitment to dealing with that critical issue.

Unfortunately, we cannot contest his assessment about the inexorable marginalization of the two-State solution, which is still the only one that responds to the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace. While the climate that has paralysed the peace process for the past two years is a shared responsibility, it is undeniable that the ongoing Israeli settlements are the main challenge to implementing a two-State solution. The settlement enterprise is the product of a deliberate policy, one that is more and more obvious, and that is carving up the territory of a future Palestinian State. We can see that in various ways: the de facto annexation of Zone C and of its natural resources, transfers of populations, the obstruction of the movement of populations, the demolition of homes and humanitarian infrastructure and a plan to legalize illegal outposts. It is our responsibility to firmly and collectively condemn that policy because we are convinced that it is leading to disaster, for not just the Palestinians, but also for Israel.

Secondly, the radicalization of people, acts of violence and terrorism and incitement to violence are also ongoing threats that can cause a rapid degeneration into an uncontrollable conflagration. We have seen that on too many occasions, with three wars Gaza in September and the violence that culminated between October in 2015 and April 2016. That violence severely undermines the prospect of two States, a Palestinian State and an Israeli State, living side by side in peace and security.

Finally, progress in the Palestinian reconciliation is also indispensable.

For several years now, the so-called status quo in the Middle East has really constituted a state of regression — daily regression for the people and for peace. With every day that passes, we see further threats to the two-State solution, and yet, more than ever, that should be our sole common compass. Given that assessment and will, France, under the leadership of the President of the Republic, Mr. François Hollande, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jean-Marc Ayrault, presented an imitative last spring aimed at finding a way out of the current impasse. Though the peace process was partially eclipsed by the serious crises elsewhere in the Middle East, our primary objective was and continues to be to place this conflict back at the heart of the political priorities of the international community.

Since the beginning and at every stage, our approach has been transparent vis-***à-vis*** the parties, inclusive and dovetailed with existing efforts, especially those of the Quartet and our Arab partners. The ministerial meeting that was held on 3 June in Paris marked the first essential phase of international mobilization to save and make the two-State solution concrete. Following that meeting, in-depth work began with all partners wishing to contribute to developing a comprehensive incentive package, one that shows that both parties can only benefit from peace, and that the current situation has a cost — a cost to Israeli and Palestinian economic development, a cost to building a viable Palestinian State and a cost to the stability and prosperity of the region as a whole. As a result of that work, which has been going on for about a year, France will organize an international conference in January, brining together all partner States that advocate for peace. Our goal is to present the contributions of the international community to relaunching the negotiating process and to concluding the implementation of a peace agreement.

First, in collectively reaffirming our support for a two-State solution in a context where the situation continues to deteriorate, we are determined to recall that it is the only possible solution to the conflict and to recreate a political climate that can actually reverse the negative spiral we are seeing on the ground and to recreate positive momentum. Secondly, our goal is achievable by promoting international engagement based on a coherent mechanism for concrete support and incentives towards relaunching dialogue between

the two parties. We all know that only the Israelis and Palestinians can achieve peace directly. However, we must also acknowledge that the conditions today are not conducive to resuming such negotiations.

Therefore, our initiative seeks to promote a convergence of efforts in the same direction with a view to recreating an enabling environment for dialogue and negotiations, showing the parties just how much they stand to gain by bringing about peace. If we do not take resolute action in that direction, the two-State solution will continue to erode and disappear, like a mirage in the desert. There is no other valid alternative that can actually meet the legitimate aspirations of both parties. We therefore must do everything within our power, while we still have time, to prevent such a drift. I will state once again that such a drift will never lead to a just, enduring solution to the conflict and will continue to threaten balance in the region.

That is the sense of efforts of France, along with all our partners, working towards a favourable momentum based on a two-State solution. We particularly call for the support of the members of the Security Council, to shoulder together the historic responsibility that is incumbent on us to achieve peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): My delegation is grateful to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his presence and briefing today. We thank him for his frank assessment and strong message, and we appreciate his untiring efforts to facilitate peace in the Middle East, specifically on the Palestinian question. I also acknowledge the presence of His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand, Mr. Murray McCully. Malaysia appreciates New Zealand's persistent commitment to pushing for Council actions to create the necessary conditions for peace in the region.

My delegation decided to take the floor today to echo the views expressed around the table for the need for the Council to take decisive and concrete action on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in line with the Council's responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations.

For far too long, the Council has been in a state of inertia when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which belies the worsening situation on the ground. Malaysia reiterates the need to create the necessary conditions for peace and to push the parties in the right direction in order to salvage the two-State solution. Clearly, doing nothing is not an option for the Security Council as an organ entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security. We must take urgent, effective actions to hault and reverse illegal settlement activities and end illegal occupations, which are fuelling radicalization in the region and beyond.

Over the years, we have heard repeated warnings from the Secretary-General and the Special Coordinator, Mr. Mladenov, about the expansion of settlement activities that threaten to bury the two-State solution. And yet, Israeli settlement activities have kept growing, despite their undeniably illegal nature under international law, the clear recommendations of the Quartet report and the widespread condemnation of the international community. Recent developments have led to a new sense of urgency, especially the unprecedented attempt by the Israeli parliament to pass a bill to legalize outposts, including on private Palestinian lands. Furthermore, just last week, Israeli authorities decided to proceed with a plan to build 770 housing units in the illegal Israeli settlement of Gilo, in East Jerusalem.

As we have heard from the speakers at the Arria Formula meeting on settlements last October, the impact of settlements on the Palestinians are far-reaching. Settlement expansion has led to an increase in settlers' violence, demolitions of Palestinian homes and structures, confiscations of Palestinian lands, discriminatory policies and denial of development infrastructure and natural resources. Palestinians are even prevented from burying their dead relatives in the Muslim cemetery adjacent to the Al-Aqsa Mosque because Israeli authorities have seized the cemetery land. Since the beginning of this year, Israel has demolished 866 Palestinian structures in Area C of the occupied West Bank, affecting over 5,000 Palestinians of whom over 1,200 have been rendered homeless, including 586 children. The widespread anger, frustration and despair inevitably fed into further radicalization of the oppressed population that has nothing more to lose.

Settlement activities constitute the single biggest threat to peace and the two-State solution. That threat has multiplied and become entrenched over the decades because of the Council's inaction. It is long overdue for the Council to assume its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security and strive to reverse the negative trends that are threatening peace and the two-State solution. The Council is responsible for

the current predicament in the occupied Palestinian territory, but we can also undo that damage if we stay true to the values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and uphold international law and international human rights standards.

I reiterate that the Council has various tools at its disposal, which it has not shied away from using in various conflict areas in the world. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be no exception. We have seen how providing incentives, whether in the form of the comprehensive Arab Peace Initiative or the billions of dollars in military aid sent to safeguard its security, have done nothing to persuade Israel to move in the direction of peace or led it to grant any concessions to uphold the two-State solution. Instead, it has further emboldened Israel to intensify its settlement activities and entrench its repressive occupations.

We need to stop rewarding illegal behaviour that threatens peace and security in the region and beyond. We need to stop shielding those who have continually violated Council resolutions, international law and human rights standards. The Council has a moral, legal and political responsibility to end Israel's repressive occupation and sanction its settlement activities, apartheid policies and gross violations of human rights, as well as to ensure accountability and support the fundamental right to self-determination. The Council should not be left high and dry, waiting for another resolution.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. Japan appreciates the dedication shown by the Secretary-General in promoting the Middle East peace process.

The briefing by the Secretary-General today was a sad reminder that we have been unable to deal with the persisting issues blocking peace and the two-State solution in the region for the past 10 years. Japan's position is that it will not recognize any unilateral change by either party that may prejudice the final resolution. In that regard, Japan reiterates that settlement activities are in violation of international law and urges Israel to completely freeze such activities. We are deeply concerned about the recent advancement of legislation that would allow for the retroactive legalization of illegal Israeli outposts located on private Palestinian land.

We firmly believe that the issues surrounding the peace process should, first and foremost, be resolved through direct negotiations. We are deeply disturbed by the continuing violence between the two sides. Although the degree of violence has been relatively low in the past few weeks, its root causes have not been addressed. The persisting acts of violence from both parties are fundamentally incompatible with a peaceful solution. It is important that leaders on both sides take steps to prevent violence and incitements to violence, and show credible commitment to the peace process.

There is broad agreement within the Council on the urgent need to save the prospects of a two-State solution. Japan supports initiatives that benefit the Middle East peace process. Japan appreciates the efforts made by the various parties and is ready to constructively engage in those initiatives. The Secretary-General noted that the Council has adopted only two resolutions concerning the Middle East peace process over the past 10 years. It is disappointing to be reminded that we are still addressing the same issues that those resolutions aimed to deal with. It is important for the Council to send a united message to the parties to reaffirm the commitment to peace. Japan believes that the message to be sent should be effective, unequivocal and meaningful, and contribute to promoting the peace process together with other initiatives. Japan stands ready to work with other Council members to that end.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): We appreciate the Secretary-General's active stand on the issue, and we share the understanding of many States represented in the Chamber that the status quo in the Middle East leads only to further instability and makes the prospects of a two-State solution increasingly remote. Therefore, only proactive diplomatic efforts, including on the part of the Council, combined with a common desire of both sides to the conflict, can lay the groundwork for restarting the political process and moving away from the ongoing deadlock in the Middle East peace process.

We cannot allow the hopes for peace on both sides to vanish completely. So many decades without real peace are inadmissible. Ukraine welcomes any international effort aimed at bringing a new dynamic to the Middle East settlement and seeking opportunities for the resumption of negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides. We therefore appreciate the ongoing efforts of France to unblock the Middle East peace process. We still hope that the Palestinian and Israeli authorities will respond positively to the invitation to hold an international conference in January next year in

Paris and will sit at the negotiating table in order to try to revive prospects for a peace settlement.

Yet again, we have to signal our strong concern over the continuous recurrence of violence in Gaza and the West Bank. The incident that occurred this week, on 14 December, left two Israeli police officers wounded and a young Palestinian man dead. The attack near the Austrian Hospice guest house in the Old City is yet another reminder to all of us of the urgent need for action.

We remain convinced that the establishment of a stable, peaceful and democratic Palestinian State is in Israel's long-term security interests. However, the ongoing process of settlement expansion and the legalization of outposts do not contribute to the already moribund peace process, and must be stopped. Settlement construction in the West Bank and the two-State solution are two paths going in opposite directions.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing today on a central issue in the Middle East that is ever present in our minds but ever absent from the Council, namely, the Palestinian question.

We had hoped that, to guide our future work, the Secretariat would issue a written report on what has been done over the past 10 years, or rather what has not been done, what has not been resolved, and what the international community, the Organization, and the Council in particular, have failed to achieve, namely, to put an end to the longest standing occupation in modern history.

Time and again, the international community has agreed on and expressed its consensus on the so-called two-State solution, comprised of an Israeli State and a Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967. Palestine would be a valuable State with Jerusalem as its capital. However, it seems that such agreement and consensus are confined only to occasional words and statements in an attempt to save face by boasting about the assistance provided to the Palestinian people. It seems that it is the fate of those people to be eternally grateful and forever indebted to those who have sought to improve their lot in exchange for surrendering their fate and future to external Powers that take control of their land, demolish their homes, displace their population and besiege it behind walls.

The reshuffling of cards and the denial of truth have reached a new low. Some have rushed to condemn Israel's attempts to legalize new outposts in the occupied Palestinian territory, hoping that we will heap praise on them. Perhaps they hope that we will overlook the fact that all settlements in occupied Palestininan territory since 1967 are illegal according to all international instruments and conventions, including Council resolutions, which have apparently become ineffectual.

The Israeli settlement activities are not just an obstacle to peace and the two-State solution; they are at the heart of the crisis. The cause of Palestine, first and foremost, is the cause of a land occupied by force; the cause of a people who have been denied their right to live a life of dignity in their own homeland. In that regard, I would like to remind the Council of an internationally agreed principle that has been buried alive, namely, the principle of land for peace principle.

The different levels of humanitarian attention accorded to the Palestinian question must be examined in comparison with other issues in the Middle East: it is truly a source of surprise. The deafening voices lamenting the absence of conscience and humanity on certain issues suddenly fall silent when the issue at hand is the issue of a people whose generations — including women and the elderly — have only known injustice over the past decades.

I call on everyone here today to self-reflect and to be true to themselves. I call on the Council to pay serious attention to the most urgent challenge of our time, namely, the possible collapse of the two-State solution.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. We also thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his efforts, which we support.

The Secretary-General summarized the past decade for us, during which unfortunately little has improved in the Middle East. It is with sadness and pain that we received today's assessment of the situation, which hardly appears encouraging.The Middle East region is suffering from a number of civil wars and sectarian wars: together with the presence of various terrorist and extremist groups the area has been transformed into a permanent battlefield and is causing enormous suffering to the civilian population, particularly in Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

In the light of what we have heard, we cannot ignore the fact that some members of the Organization, including Security Council members, have had and continue to have significant shared responsibility in those conflicts. As for their place in history, only time will tell.

With regard to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian question, this is a topic that must continue to be high on the agendas of the Organization and the Security Council and we should not give up in spite of the current impasse. Ever since the partition of Palestine in 1948, Uruguay has been in favour of the creation of two States, one Jewish and one Arab. We have always followed the situation in the region very attentively and we are extremely concerned about the lack of progress between Palestine and Israel given the humanitarian, political and security consequences it holds for both countries, as well as the impact it has on the entire Middle East region.

Uruguay would once again like to reiterate its support for the right of both Israel and Palestine to live in peace within safe, secure and internationally recognized borders in a environment of renewed cooperation free of any threats or actions that could threaten peace. We once again endorse the two-State solution for two independent States and we are convinced that this is the only way that will make it possible to ensure the peaceful co-existence of Israel and Palestine. Today it is more essential than ever that the international community reinforce its efforts to support this process and encourage the parties to return to the negotiating table.

Uruguay is also worried about the expansion of settlements in occupied Palestinian territory and the West Bank. As we have mentioned, these settlements are illegal under international law and are in contravention of the recommendations of the Quartet. Uruguay reiterates its call to the parties to refrain from taking any unilateral actions could undermine dialogue and to abide fully by their obligations under international law. We urge Israel to halt its settlement practices.

Futhermore, Uruguay emphatically condemns terrorist acts and the glorification of violence occurring on Palestinian territory. It is therefore extremely important to give political signals to find a way out of the current vicious cycle of withdrawal and violent confrontation. It is important for the parties to refrain from taking unilateral measures that undermine dialogue and instead comply with all obligations under international law and Council resolutions in good faith.

We reiterate our willingness to continue working together in order to reactivate the peace process through all existing initiatives in order to overcome the current status quo, including some within the framework of the Council. None of these initiatives can or should replace the best way to achieve peace, that is, direct, bilateral negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians that will make it possible to find a satisfactory solution to this process.

In this Chamber in the past I quoted the American poet Bob Dylan, specifically the old song *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. I fear that, without decisive and concrete action by the Security Council, we will have to utter a different phrase as times will have indeed changed.

Mr. Barro (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Let me begin by thanking Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for giving us his final briefing on various aspects involved in the Palestinian question. Like other speakers before me, I would like to pay tribute to him once again for his commitment to this issue.

The briefing we just heard is full of lessons, but we must also face the sad reality of the Palestinian people. Despite multiple initiatives, the future of the peace process continues to offer little hope: in fact, we might say that it has reached an impassse. Unfortunately, we see the two-State solution disappearing more rapidly each day — at a time when we are witnessing the continued acceleration of settlement activities, especially new units in Gilo, East Jerusalem, whereas in 2006 such demolitions of homes, premises and other buildings affected only 2,500 citizens.

At the last Arria Formula meeting on settlement activity, on 14 October, thanks to the initiative of five members of the Security Council, we heard statements made by experts, including Israeli citizens, that there is clear progress in populating occupied Palestinian territory based on the official policies of the Israeli Government. We therefore solemnly called for the Security Council at last to work towards ending the occupation and settlement activities, which, I remind the Council, affects both Palestinians and Israelis alike.

I would also like to highlight the ongoing impact of this conflict on children, mostly Palestinian;. But we must also not forget that Israeli children, too, are

suffering from this conflict. As far as these children are concerned, they have known only war and occupation. However, along with Israelis and Palestinians alike, we share the same aspirations for peace and stability. The Council must act to restart negotiations leading to a solution to those disputes.

In accordance with resolution 1860 (2009), we reiterate our call to lift the blockade on Gaza, which has had devastating humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences, affecting around 2 million people, half of whom are children. We recall the urgent need to rebuild Gaza, in particular through the pledges that were made at the international donors conference held in Cairo in 2014.

Without progress in the peace process, there will be no end to the violence that affects both Palestinians and Israelis. We reiterate our disapproval and condemnation of violence and terrorism, as well as incitement to hatred, regardless of the perpetrators or the motivation. We moreover reaffirm our position in favour of holding a follow-up conference to the conference held in Paris in June in order to give every chance of success to the French initiative, for which our delegation renews its support. We also support diplomatic efforts undertaken by Egypt and the Russian Federation, which, in our view, require further coordination.

It is the responsibility of the international community, of the Security Council first, as the guarantor of international peace and security, to work for the two-State solution — one Palestinian and the other Israeli, living side by side in peace and security within internationally recognized, secure borders. That is the intention of all the relevant United Nations resolutions and what is recommended in the Quartet's report of 1 July. According to the report, the time has come for this body, whose members agree on the obstacles that stand in the way of a lasting solution to the dispute, to take up this critical issue as soon as possible and reaffirm the centrality of the two-State solution.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Out the outset, I thank His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing, reporting the lack of progress and the contradictions of the Organization with regard to the Palestinian question. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the dedication of the Secretary-General to peace in the Middle East and his firm commitment to the women, men and children who have suffered because of the conflicts affecting the region.

In the context of the various complex and tragic events now taking place in the Middle East, which continue to be a source of deep concern for the international community, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will focus its statement today — which will probably be the last in the Security Council — on the Palestinian question, one of the most unjust and tragic situations that even the United Nations has not been able to resolve. It is one of the deepest and most influential with regard to the other problems and tensions affecting that afflicted region. Moreover, it is a long-standing issue that we have not be able to resolve. So far it has been a massive failure of the Security Council, above all of the permanent members, who through their veto or their silence have encouraged Israeli violence against the Palestinian people.

During our term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, we have witnessed with frustration the disregard of continual appeals by Venezuela and other Council members, as well as numerous Member States and the international community in general, for the Security Council to take decisive action and adopt a unified position promoting peace, the end of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, the lifting of the blockade on the Gaza Strip and the settlement of the conflict through the two-State solution.

We believe that the Organization's ethical commitment to the Palestinians and the responsibility of the Security Council in maintaining peace and security compel us to insist more forcefully, in this body, that it take steps to move the peace process forward, ensure that the Council continues to be actively and constructively involved in the process to achieve a just and lasting solution to the conflict and restore hope to those who are suffering from the brutal occupation that United Nations will honour its moral debt towards the Palestinian people. Otherwise, this meeting will be nothing other than an exercise in diplomatic rhetoric.

We believe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at a total impasse. The occupying Power, Israel, remains intransigent and not only continues its pernicious and unjust occupation of Palestine, but also the expansion of its territory through the expropriation of land legitimately held by Palestinians and the building of settlements. The aggression of the Israeli

Government against the Palestinian people through the expropriation of land, the forced displacement and expulsion of Palestinians, the demolition of Palestinian infrastructure and homes and attempts to retroactively legalize Israeli settlements in the West Bank is a clear demonstration of an extremist and aggressive policy launched by the Israeli Government and supported by the colonist sectors of public opinion in Israel that see the annexation of Palestinian territory as a fact on the ground, thereby undermining of the two-State solution and the viability of a Palestinian State. Approximately 700 Palestinian homes have been destroyed this year by the occupying Power, while plans to expand settlements and construction have not ceased. It is up to the Council to take urgent action to condemn illegal settlements and demand and require that Israel end this illegal expansionist policy.

Furthermore, the Israeli authorities have insisted on their intent to crush the will of the Palestinians by ongoing violations of their most fundamental basic rights in the occupied territories and in the Gaza Strip, which has been under siege and blockaded by Israel. Israel has made disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force through its military and security forces, with lethal consequences, including more than 220 Palestinian fatalities since October 2015 and more than 7,000 Palestinians wounded by real ammunition and rubber bullets fired by the Israeli forces. That violence has not subsided.

One must also take into account the more than 7,000 Palestinians who are being held in Israeli jails, including more than 500 children, for whose release we continue to call. We wonder how the permanent members of the Council can remain silent on that situation, especially those who provide Israel with political and military support while in other situations they deliver emotional statements on the subject of human rights. How is it possible to sustain such a double moral standard?

Moreover, the situation of the more than 700 individuals who are suffering unjust administrative detention is of grave concern. They include the recent cases of Anas Shadid and Ahmad Abu Fara, victims of administrative detention who have been on a hunger strike for more than 50 days to protest the deplorable conditions of detention in Israeli jails. Their health has been seriously harmed by the authorities' indifference and refusal to release them. Israel does not care about the fate of the Palestinian people. Its responsibility as an occupying Power is totally ignored. We therefore once again request the Council to consider the possibility of seeking concrete and expeditious measures for the effective protection of the Palestinian people from the abuses by Israel in the occupied territories, in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention, on the protection of Civilians.

There must also be an end to impunity, which shelters those responsible for attacks, acts of aggresion, killings and violations of the human rights of Palestinians. Accountability for such reprehensible behaviour should a part of the demands to which the Israeli authorities must answer. In addition to the aggresion provoked by institutional authorities, Palestinians are currently suffering from the violence from more than 600,000 Israeli settlers — with the direct and implicit support of the Israeli authorities to carry out their acts of extreme violence — who are continuing to uproot Palestinians from their own ancestral land in order to blot out the notion and the very possibility of a Palestinian State.

The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, which has been blockaded and besieged by Israel, as well as in the other occupied territories, reveals a deteriorating situation characterized by continuous violence and ongoing pressure exerted by Israel, in violation of fundamental norms of international law, including international humanitarian law, so as to limit or deny access to health care, education, housing, jobs and basic services — such as water and electricity — and the freedom of Palestinians in the West Bank to undertake religious and cultural activities. Furthermore, the blockade in Gaza has prevented the Palestinians from even beginning to rebuild the territory after the criminal Israel aggression of 2014. The blockade has cut all links with the West Bank.

The people of Gaza are encountering similar difficulties to those in other occupied territories regarding access to basic services and fundamental rights. All of this is due to the actions of the occupying Power. The blockade of Gaza serves to further radicalize the Palestinian population in order to maintain the division between Gaza from the West Bank.

In that sombre context for Palestinians, the possibility of negotations that might lead to a peaceful, sustainable and fair two-State solution is more urgent than ever. The role of the Security Council is fundamental in moving towards the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We must therefore abandon inaction and commit ourselves to seeking effective

options to achieve peace. In that regard, there is a need for a Security Council resolution demanding an immediate cessation of the illegal Israeli settlements, in order to send an initial message of the unity of the Council, and thereby on an issue on which there is a broad convergence of views with respect to settlements being illegal, constituting an obstacle to peace and a factor that negatively affects the possibility of a two-State solution. We all agree that the end of the settlement policy would be an important step towards direct negotiations.

We would like to say that we think it inappropriate and unjust to speak in this Chamber about disproportionate resolutions against Israel. It is unacceptable when the responsibility of the United Nations is to support the weakest party to a conflict, who is often the victim — in this case, that party is the Palestinian people. The Palestinian people have been savagely assaulted and violently punished by the occupying Power, which violates international law with impunity thanks to its military superiority and the political support it has in the Security Council. We think that the Council ought to assume its responsibility, which is common but differentiated in this case, because a large part of the Palestinian tragedy is the responsibility of the Council due to its inaction and its veto of peace.

In the waning days of our country's status as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, we would like to reiterate the position that we expressed on the very first day of our term on the Council, namely, that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land must end — for we all know that it is the root cause of the conflict — and that we must support the work of the Middle East Quartet and all other efforts by the international community, including initiatives by various members of the Council, such as Egypt, France and Russia, which we commend.

We also welcome the holding of an international conference in January. We should do everything possible to promote the political process and negotiations between Israel and Palestine with a view to establishing a peaceful two-State solution, taking into account the Arab Peace Initiative and acknowledging the right of the Palestinian people to live in their own State — a full-fledged State Member of the Organization that cosexists peacefully alongside Israel, in line with the internationally recognized pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. All of this is in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. These are inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. My country, which has always supported the just Palestinian cause, will continue to advocate in this forum and others for urgent action to end the conflict at hand and put an end to the shameful and criminal occupation by Israel of Palestinian territory.

As we have said on numerous occasions, and as has been repeated numerous times here in the Council, the status quo is unsustainable. We cannot continue offering excuses and preconditions on events that are the consequence of the occupation, including the desperate acts of violence, which we also condemn; or for the lack of unity among Palestinians. The Security Council must act decisively to effect change in this situation that demands and obliges both sides to come back to negotiations. It must express support for the Middle East Quartet in order to show support for the efforts of other Member States in the Council to bring the parties together. Venezuela is ready to work on a draft resolution with Member States, such as New Zealand, to provide impetus to work urgently on this and constructively contribute to a document that reflects the consensus that exists among the members of the Council regarding the necessary condemnation of illegal Israeli settlements and the need for progress on the Palestinian question.

As this is our last statement as a non-permament member of the Security Council on the Palestinian question, we call on the conscience of all those present, particularly the permanent members, so that we can hear the clamor of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights to their own State and to peaceful coexistence. We must take concrete steps forward on the difficult path towards a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and for his efforts throughout his tenure to secure peace and protect civilians in the Middle East and throughout the world.

With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the trends are indeed discouraging, which is why it is so critical that we all work to keep the possibility of peace open. There really is no alternative. The United States remains committed to achieving a lasting resolution of the conflict and we will continue to work to advance the interest that we all share — bringing about a

lasting peace between Israel and Palestine. We remain in close consultations with the parties to the conflict and key stakeholders to try to move things in a more positive direction. We continue to call upon all sides to demonstrate with actions and policies a genuine commitment to the two-State solution, which will enable a resumption of meaningful negotiations in the future.

The current United States Administration has consistently opposed every effort to delegitimize Israel or undermine its security, including at the United Nations. We will continue to oppose any draft resolutions that would seek to do so.

As the Council knows, we are very concerned about the situation on the ground and believe that current trends are moving in the wrong direction. That includes our serious concerns about continued settlement activities. Make no mistake: the United States views settlements as illegitimate and counterproductive to the cause of peace. In his recent remarks at the Saban Forum, Secretary Kerry made clear that Israel now faces a choice between continued settlement activity and a two-State solution in the future. As he said, while we do not believe that settlements are the root cause of the conflict, they clearly represent a barrier to achieving a two-State solution. The number of settlers in the West Bank has increased from 110,000 at the time of the Oslo Accords, in 1993, to nearly 400,000 today.

We are deeply disturbed by Israel's moving forward on the unprecedented legalization under Israeli law of outposts deep in the West Bank. We believe the potential legalization of thousands of settlement housing units that are currently illegal under Israeli law would profoundly damage prospects for a two-State solution. We are further troubled when Ministers in the Israeli Government say publicly that there will be no Palestinian State.

Terrorism, incitement to violence, glorification of terrorists and other violent acts also profoundly threaten efforts to advance peace. We continue to stress to the Palestinian leadership the importance of strongly opposing violence in all forms. We continue to make clear that the terrorism and incitement to violence must end. Such acts run contrary to efforts to preserve prospects for peace.

We strongly condemn terrorist acts and other violence against Israelis and Palestinians. There is absolutely no justification for such acts. We are also deeply concerned about reports of excessive use of force by Israeli security forces against Palestinian civilians. Authorities should conduct timely and transparent investigations into these incidents and ensure that appropriate measures, including prosecution when warranted, are taken to follow through on the findings.

There are some positive examples of coordination between Israelis and Palestinians that should be encouraged. For example, coordination between Israeli and Palestinian security forces has played a key role in preventing a greater deterioration in the security situation, and that coordination should continue. We have also seen coordination among civil-society actors work to the benefit of both sides. Facing some of the worst fires in recent memory, Palestinian civil-defence teams funded by the United States Government again came to the aid of their Israeli counterparts, battling fires in Haifa and in Beit Meir and Nataf, near Jerusalem. This is the type of cooperation that can benefit all.

Economic development is also necessary, and the private sector can play a vital role. For example, the first Coca Cola factory opened in the Gaza at the end of November. The plant will create 300 direct jobs and 3,000 indirect jobs in the Gaza supply chain. The licensed manufacturer of Coca Cola in the West Bank and Gaza also committed an initial $1.3 million to a corporate social-responsibility fund to create additional jobs for Gaza youth and improve access to clean drinking water in a Gaza refugee camp. On 1 December, donors pledged at least $175 million in grants and $270 million in soft loans for the trilateral Jordanian-Israeli-Palestinian Red Sea-Dead Sea water project. Cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority is vital to addressing the region's water scarcity and ensuring the survival of the Dead Sea.

Still, additional steps are urgently needed to stabilize the economic situation, especially in Gaza, and to reverse current trends. We continue to stress the importance of both sides demonstrating through policies and actions a genuine commitment to a two-State solution in order to reduce tensions, rebuild trust, avoid a cycle of escalation and restore hope.

Mr. Martins (Angola): This is the last opportunity for us to speak in this Chamber on the question of Palestine and the Middle East peace process. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General and commend him for his consistent engagement with the

peace process, and in particular for his work in favour of the two-State solution. I would also like to express appreciation the positive engagement of New Zealand, and especially the presence in the Council this morning of Foreign Minister Murray McCulley.

Over the past two years, a great amount of information was provided from United Nations sources, humanitarian agencies, civil society and warnings made by the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy with regard to the unsustainable status quo on the Israeli-Palestinian issue and the mounting threats to the two-State solution. However, despite the overwhelming evidence, the Council has been unable to effectively address the situation.

The matter of the fact is that Israel, with its relatively great military power, has pursued the colonization of territories against the will of their populations for almost half a century. Palestinians living under harsh occupation and brutal blockade face systematic discrimination and violations of their basic human rights. We in the Security Council cannot continue defending equal treatment of both sides and shared responsibility for the lack of progress in the two-State solution. We wonder how it is possible to apply the same level of legal, political and moral obligations and responsibilities to the Palestinians, who are dispossessed of their homelands, deprived of natural resources and economic development and restricted in their movement. Such treatment is one of the main root causes that creates, fuels and breeds anger, frustration and despair, giving rise to acts of violence and extremism.

In that context, we commend the drive in recent months by the international community to mobilize in order to salvage the process and prospects for the two-State solution. Israeli policies of continued settlement expansion is a real threat to the two-State solution. All members of the Council reiterated that point this morning. The Government's latest move to adopt a legalization bill aimed at sanctioning the illegal settlements and outposts built on private Palestinian property in the West Bank is a step further towards annexation and a demonstration of our collective failure to bring about dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. The Council is called upon to act decisively and in unity if we are to defuse another explosive ingredient in an already volatile region.

Angola therefore welcomes initiatives by a number of Council members to unblock the situation, especially the French conference that is due to take place, seeking to restart negotiations, since it is our collective responsibility to act, and urges the Council to uphold its responsibilities in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We furthermore welcome efforts by the League of Arab States and look forward to the outcome of the ministerial meeting, which we hope will provide a workable road map on the way forward. As important as it is to get the parties back to the negotiating table, however, we must insist that the Israeli Government halt and reverse the illegal settlement activity and put an end to the blockade of Gaza, which has been the cause of a dire humanitarian situation so far and for too long.

During the past two years, we have tried to actively participate in all initiatives to revive the Middle East peace process. In Security Council debates, in private consultations, in several Arria Formula meetings, we have tried to contribute to finding a solution for this long-standing conflict. The international community and the United Nations membership agree that the Council has enough tools at its disposal to address the issue of the settlements, since they are illegal under international law and constitute the most concrete threat to the two-State solution.

As we come to the end of our two-year participation as a non-permanent member, let me reiterate the hope that the Council will look at the two-State solution not as a mere slogan, but as a workable, effective road map towards peace in this very volatile region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a brief statement in my national capacity.

I should like to ask Mr. Mladenov to convey to the Secretary-General, who had to leave the Chamber because of other commitments, that he could not have done more in 10 years. He has tried everything. He maintained innumerable contacts with the parties and we share his assessment.

Spain too will be leaving the Security Council in two weeks. I will therefore provide a brief summary of our position and what we are currently concerned about.

We are concerned that the Knesset is considering a draft law to legalize outposts in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. We are concerned about the expansion of

settlements and the demolition of Palestinian structures. We are also concerned about the terrorist violence and incitement to the use of force. Lastly, our understanding is that reconciliation at the intra-Palestinian level is essential if we are to reactivate the peace process.

Our commitment — Spain's commitment — to peace in Palestine has no expiration date. It began with the Madrid Conference in 1991, and we have continued to work since then. The most recent example of this was the summit of religious leaders of the Middle East, which was held in Alicante on 15 and 16 November. I am pleased to say that this was a success and that a press release was adopted that represented an important step forward for tolerance and mutual respect. When we leave the Security Council, we will continue to take initiatives of this kind.

Over the past two years, at no time have we lost hope that the peace process could be unblocked, nor did we resign ourselves to seeing the Security Council fail to play a role in this process. Peace, as many have said, can be the only outcome of direct bilateral negotiations and the support of the international community can be a key factor. For that reason, we support the various initiatives currently under way, in particular the French initiative and the work of the Quartet. We also reiterate the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative. Any action in the Security Council must take this context into account.

Like other representatives, we note that behind all the Security Council's initiatives there is a will to preserve the two States and that there is a clear feeling that the settlements are among the main threats. I shall therefore conclude by saying that I trust that the Security Council can give effect to concrete action before Spain leaves the Council.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7840

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7840th meeting
Friday, 16 December 2016, 4 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. González de Linares Palou	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Coleman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

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16-44501 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 4.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/1066, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2327 (2016).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Ms. Coleman (United States): Last month, the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, warned the Security Council that there was a strong risk of violence escalating along ethnic lines, with a potential to spiral into genocide. Just this week, the head of a team of United Nations human rights investigators in South Sudan echoed Dieng's message, saying that South Sudan is on the brink of an all-out civil war, which could destabilize the entire region.

The horrors facing the South Sudanese people are extraordinary. We know that 7.5 million people — 75 per cent of the population — are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. That is not the only appalling condition in South Sudan. Rape has also been an element of an apparently intentional strategy for terrorizing and punishing the population. What all that tells us is that the status quo in South Sudan is unbearable and cannot persist.

Today, the Security Council has taken a necessary and important step in helping address that bleak situation. Today's resolution 2327 (2016), unanimously adopted, urges parties to return to the peace process as the primary means of ending the conflict. The resolution also ensures, in the face of the heightened tensions I have described, that the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has the necessary tools to carry out its core mandate — the protection of civilians.

The resolution decides to continue the deployment and full operationalization of the 4,000-strong Regional Protection Force, which we first mandated four months ago, and it responds to the Secretary-General's request to increase the number of police assigned to UNMISS. Both of those steps are intended to strengthen the Mission's ability to protect civilians. The resolution also retains the other key responsibilities of UNMISS, including the monitoring and investigating of human rights abuses and violations and creating the security conditions for humanitarian assistance to reach all those who need it.

Furthermore, the resolution calls on peacekeepers to do more to prevent and respond to sexual violence and urges the United Nations to incorporate lessons learned from the attacks on the protection of civilians sites in Malakal and Juba. In that regard, we note our expectation that the United Nations will implement reforms to better enable the Mission to protect civilians and will report to the Council on its progress.

The resolution is a reflection of the briefings we have heard over the past few months from high-level United Nations officials on the deteriorating situation in South Sudan and is focused on ensuring that UNMISS has the right mandate and has the tools it needs to implement it. The resolution expresses our continued commitment to considering the use of sanctions and an arms embargo as tools to reduce the ability and incentives of those who attack civilians and derail the peace process.

While some have argued that those measures would be counterproductive or irrelevant, we cannot think of a more appropriate measure than an arms embargo that would impede the flow of arms, particularly heavy weapons, to a Government intent on pursuing violence at the expense of its people and to rebel factions that aim to disrupt the peace agreement.

Similarly, we believe that targeted sanctions can be an effective tool in sending a message from the Council about our disapproval of leaders, on both sides, who are responsible for inciting violence in South Sudan. We are prepared to support imposing such measures in response to the worsening violence that includes Government offences, the Government's ongoing obstruction of UNMISS and the regional protection force — despite pledges to the contrary — and the role played by individual actors in perpetuating the cycle of violence in South Sudan.

South Sudan is on a precipice. The country can return to the peace process towards greater stability or allow further violence to devolve into outright ethnic war. We have already seen a glimpse of what the high cost of the latter would be, with reports of thousands of women and girls having been raped and gang-raped, people fleeing their homes en masse and the spectre of widespread hunger following a disruption of normal agricultural production due to continued conflict.

With resolution 2327 (2016), the Council recognizes those high stakes and commits to trying to return the country to peace and stability.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation supported resolution 2327 (2016), based on the need to pursue active international efforts for a peace settlement of the armed conflict in South Sudan, and the important role played in that process by the United Nations Mission in that country. However, we are compelled to note that the sponsors, as they have done with certain other Council resolutions on South Sudan, again failed to take on board a whole string of serious concerns of the Russian delegation and several others. In the text of resolutions they pushed through their own national priorities, neglecting the red lines of other delegations.

That even further undermines the unity and effectiveness of the Council's work, including on the subject of South Sudan. In particular, the pen-holders rejected the proposal to modify the Mission's mandate, singling out as a priority the task of supporting the peace process. They also refused to give Blue Helmets powers to provide assistance to the South Sudanese police. That is precisely what the Secretary-General recommended pursuant to the autumn review of the activities of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan. Juba, too, has long been asking for this. It turns out that for South Sudan, some of our colleagues only seek to wish to use the stick, including new sanctions; there is never any talk of carrots.

As before, we think that inappropriate to include Security Council sanctions against South Sudan in the resolution, the main intention of which seems to be to extend the mandate of the peacekeeping mission. Such ultimatums and wording look all the stranger given the progress in implementing the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. For example, we have a successfully working Transitional Government of National Unity and Parliament, with the participation of representatives of the armed opposition. President Salva Kiir has initiated a nation-wide dialogue and an amnesty for supporters of Riek Machar. Juba has stated its categorical consent for the deployment of the Regional Protection Force.

Despite all that positive momentum, the sponsors of the draft resolution sought at any cost to push through wording on sanctions. The delegation of the United States of America does not seem bothered that its draft resolution submitted in November on expanding the Security Council sanctions regime against South Sudan was supported by fewer than half of Council members. The sponsors also ignored the latest Intergovernmental Authority on Development summit decision that new sanctions were counterproductive to the settlement process. Our colleagues directly stated that they were only interested in those African documents that were consistent with their own interests and approaches.

As before, we cannot agree to wording on the future hybrid court in South Sudan. It runs counter to the provisions of the 2015 Peace Agreement, according to which the institution and activities of that judicial body are the exclusive prerogative of the African Union Commission. We have warned many times of how unacceptable it is to attempt to deploy unmanned aerial vehicles against the will of the Government of South Sudan. The wording in favour of their use by the United Nations Mission effectively flouts the State sovereignty of that country.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China has very closely followed the situation in South Sudan. President Salva Kiir of South Sudan announced the initiation of the nation-wide dialogue. The South Sudanese Transitional Government of National Unity has unconditionally accepted the deployment of the Regional Protection Force. It also announced concrete measures in support of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) and of the humanitarian workers in fulfilling their mandates. China welcomes those recent developments.

The international community should take this opportunity to call on all parties in South Sudan to implement the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and return to the search for a political solution in order to attain peace, stability and development as soon as possible. China welcomes the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) recent convening of a summit and the issuance of a communiqué on South Sudan, and China supports IGAD's continued leading role in mediating that matter.

The South Sudan Transitional Government has taken an important step in implementing resolution 2304 (2014) and the Joint Communiqué. The Council, in turn, should send out more positive messages and signals in order to encourage the parties in South Sudan to meet each other half way and jointly commit to national peace, stability and sustainable development. With respect to to sanctions, the Security Council should act prudently in order to avoid reversing the current positive momentum.

China supports the renewal of the UNMISS mandate. China appreciates the Mission's role in implementing the Peace Agreement, protecting the civilian population and delivering humanitarian assistance. We hope that the Secretariat can comprehensively review the new and emerging challenges faced by United Nations peacekeeping operations and systematically improve its peacekeeping work in order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and ensure the enhanced protection and safety of peacekeepers by giving them a better capacity to deal with complex situations and fulfil their mandates.

The Chinese Government is consistent in its support of the peace process in South Sudan and has provided assistance to South Sudan's State-building efforts, within its capabilities. China has dispatched more than 1,000 peacekeepers to UNMISS. China stands ready to maintain, alongside the international community, its constructive role in assisting South Sudan to achieve lasting peace and stability.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation voted in favour of resolution 2327 (2016), extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). Despite the impediments we faced during the negotiating process, the limited time the pen-holders made available for a serious, substantive negotiation on the draft resolution and our concerns over some of the resolution's provisions, Egypt perceives that the real political benefit achieved today was the Council's success in reaching a minimum level of consensus on the contents of today's resolution, after heeding the views and concerns of the three African States that played the most important role in reaching that consensus.

We were and remain firm believers in the vital significance of a united political message from the Council to the warring parties in South Sudan. Such a united message would give momentum towards a comprehensive peaceful settlement to the crisis on the basis of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

Egypt would like to underscore that the policy of adopting punitive and menacing approaches has proved its ineffectiveness and failed to end the conflict in South Sudan. We therefore believe in the need to focus the efforts of the Council on reaching a political breakthrough, promoting dialogue among the parties to the conflict to address the root causes of the crisis, ending the tensions and achieving comprehensive reconciliation to support the creation of a strong national identity for all South Sudanese. That would be the sole and optimal way to protect civilians, put an end to the violations of human rights and stop the human suffering faced by the South Sudanese since 2013.

In parallel to the message addressed to the international community and the Security Council, we have a message of even greater importance to convey to all of the parties in South Sudan. They all bear the responsibility for alleviating the suffering of their people and meet the aspirations that were raised by the secession and formation of their young State. Furthermore I reaffirm that the patience and understanding of the international community concerning the specific nature of the situation in the

South Sudan and the challenges it is facing must not be interpreted as acceptance of the continued killing of innocents and violations against civilians.

We wish to reaffirm once again our full support for the work of UNMISS and our appreciationg for its coordinated efforts to protect civilians and alleviate their suffering. We do not accept any challenge or impediment to the work or mandate of the Mission. Egypt is ready to work as a mediator among the various viewpoints inside the Council and to provide any assistance necessary to South Sudan in overcoming its current crisis.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela voted in favour of resolution 2327 (2016), convinced of the need to conserve the unity of the Security Council with respect to the situation in South Sudan and given the important role of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) on the ground, in particular its mandate to protect civilians and the support it can provide towards the implementation of the peace agreement.

Although my country decided to support the resolution just adopted, we wish to stress the fact that the negotiating process did not address certain special interest concerns expressed by Venezuela. Among the issues that were not addressed, we wish to highlight the language of today's resolution referring to sanctions, and reiterate our emphatic condemnation of the attacks on the Mission, its personnel and facilities, which must be respected in accordance with international law. We believe it unnecessary to include threats of a potential imposition of additional measures against South Sudan when those measures are not directly related to a text that is intended to renew the mandate of the Mission — all the more so when the resolution sets out the expansion of the sanctions regime imposed on that country. In our opinion, this would be the appropriate context for addressing the sanctions.

However, in that regard we note the position of the region, which only 10 days ago stressed that an

> "an arms embargo or sanctions on South Sudan will not provide the solution being sought for permanent peace and stability in the country and stresses that what is required is dialogue, reconciliation and commitment by all South Sudanese parties to faithfully implement the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan and for the region and the international community to support them".

We therefore reiterate once again our position on the necessity of applying African solutions to African problems. We believe that in order to maintain consistency in the supremacy of the political process, the Security Council should join efforts in revitalizing the political process in South Sudan and progress in drawing up a clear political strategy to comprehensively deal with the conflict in South Sudan in strict coordination with countries and organizations of the region.

That is why we not only note, but also welcome the recent announcement by President Salva Kiir of his decision to convene an inclusive national dialogue and the decision of the Transitional Government of National Unity to authorize the unconditional deployment of the Regional Protection Force. Furthermore, once again the concerns expressed by several countries, including Venezuela, about references to unmanned aerial vehicles or unmanned, unarmed aircraft systems were ignored. These systems have frequently met with the opposition of the State of South Sudan because of their implications for the safeguarding of its sovereignty.

The same thing happened when we indicated concerns about any interference by the Council in the affairs of the African Union, when the intention was expressed to assess the work of that regional organization in the establishment of the hybrid court for South Sudan, in accordance with international standards that are not clearly defined. As in the past, we participated actively in the discussion and negotiation of the draft resolution, in a consistently constructive spirit in search of consensus. However, the penholder's negativity and inflexibility in accepting questions of principle, such as that I have just raised, with a view to adopting a text that might generate dissension, has required us to speak out.

In conclusion, we trust that future concerns will take these concerns into account so that we may achieve a balanced text for an appropriate instrument to support the work of UNMISS.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): Malaysia welcomes the adoption of resolution 2327 (2016) today. We thank the United States for its efforts and Council members for their constructive engagement, which have contributed to bridging the gaps and achieving a more agreeable resolution. Malaysia supports resolution 2327 (2016) as

the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) maintains a critical role and functions in assisting and supporting the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan in implementing the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, as reflected in the special report of the Secretary-General on the review of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. UNMISS, in cooperation and coordination with the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan will be better equipped to continue playing a pivotal and effective role in ensuring the safety and security of the people of South Sudan.

Malaysia therefore welcomes the decision of the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan to fully and unconditionally implement resolution 2304 (2016) and the Joint Communiqué with the Council. We appreciate the ongoing efforts of the Transitional Government of South Sudan and further encourage the Government, UNMISS and the United Nations to enhance their engagement and partnership. We also commend the leadership role and solidarity shown by the regional partners — namely, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development — in mediating the dialogue to restore peace and stability in South Sudan.

Finally, we wish to reiterate that Malaysia supports the aim of resolution 2327 (2016) to provide the opportunity and retain the platform for the Transitional Government of National Unity and UNMISS to continue their cooperation and partnership for the well-being of South Sudan and its people.

Mr. Taula (New Zealand): New Zealand strongly supports the work of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and we are pleased that the Council was able to reach consensus on the Mission's new mandate. That said, we would have preferred a fuller discussion in order to work through the contentious issues, and we hope that sufficient time will be provided for such a discussion at the next renewal.

The Council should continue to closely monitor the suitability of the UNMISS mandate in the light of developing circumstances on the ground. It will be important for the incoming Special Representative of the Secretary-General to make his own assessment of the needs of the Mission with fresh eyes and to bring that assessment to the Council early next year. It will also be important for the work of the task force headed by Assistant Secretary-General Wane on the independent special investigation to be mainstreamed into the future mandate. In the meantime, we support the Secretary-General's message from his strategic assessment of UNMISS that the Mission needs to focus on its most pressing tasks, particularly the protection of civilians and support to the political process.

As a final point and as this may be our last public statement on a peacekeeping mission before our term ends, I wish to briefly note New Zealand's efforts to provide new, more meaningful Security Council engagement with troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and other key stakeholders through informal triangular consultations. We encourage Council members to continue those efforts to engage TCCs more productively. We also owe it to our peacekeepers and the people they are mandated to protect to ensure that they are more consistently provided with clear and realistic mandates, as well as the resources, equipment and support to carry them out.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation voted in favour of resolution 2327 (2016), working in close cooperation with the delegations of the African member States, as we are convinced of the need for the Security Council to be united in addressing the serious crisis in the Republic of South Sudan. That approach is supported by our determination to accompany South Sudan in its quest for stability and lasting peace, while supporting the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and troop-contributing countries, to which we again pay special tribute for their efforts and great sacrifices in a very difficult environment.

The scope of challenges requires not only the Security Council's ongoing investment, as reflected by its many decisions in the past year, not to the ongoing work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), for South Sudan and the other countries of the region, but also its united approach, in full coordination with the organizations and countries of the subregion, which have an important role to play.

Given the humanitarian emergency and the imperative to protect civilians, we must provide the Mission with the means for effective response. We believe that if it is to succeed, the Security Council needs to engage in dynamic and constructive dialogue both with the Transitional Government of National Unity and with the subregional and regional organizations, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development

and African Union. Such exchanges and cooperation, which we will need to further bolster, must address the main elements involved in stabilizing South Sudan, including the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, the protection of civilians, upholding human rights and providing humanitarian assistance.

In conclusion, my delegation takes due note of the decision of the South Sudanese Government to authorize the deployment of the Regional Protection Force and to organize a national inclusive dialogue. We encourage the Government to continue along the path of national reconciliation.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes the adoption of resolution 2327 (2016) today, renewing the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). It is a vital Mission, carrying out perhaps our most important role — protecting civilians when they need it most. I want to pay tribute to the brave men and women that make up the peacekeeping force as they undertake their duty in one of the world's most dangerous environments. In many ways, they are charged with, let us be frank, an impossible task — peacekeeping where there is no peace to keep. Some point to progress on the ground; that is not what I see.

Last month, we heard from Adama Dieng that violence is ongoing and at risk of dangerously escalating along ethnic lines. Despite statements from the Government, the people of South Sudan continue to risk their lives to flee the violence in their country, with over 7,000 refugees arriving in Uganda alone in the second week of December. So the work of UNMISS matters, and it is painfully clear that it has much, much more to do.

The United Kingdom calls on all South Sudanese leaders to end the violence. All parties must genuinely engage in an inclusive political solution. We have been waiting far too long to see meaningful action from leaders in Juba. We have heard the Government's statements. It says it is pursuing peace. It says it is agreeing to the deployment of the Regional Protection Force, and it claims that it will allow UNMISS to fulfil its mandates. We must now see that in its actions and not just in its words. We call on our partners in the region to support the United Nations efforts in South Sudan. The conflict does not stop at its borders; in fact, South Sudan's neighbours are the ones that know it the best of all. They are now playing host to over a million refugees. For peace to take root, we need to ensure that the United Nations is acting in cooperation with the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, all pressing for the same ultimate end.

The people of South Sudan can no longer afford empty promises. They are the ones who are paying the highest price for this war, and they are paying for it with their lives and livelihoods. If the Government continues its track record of failing to deliver peace, we can and must act. Everyone around the table knows that we do have tools. Those include sanctions and an arms embargo. The United Kingdom believes that those are tools that should be used to save lives. We believe that it is critical that this be linked to actions that undermine the ceasefire and result in widespread violence. The Government must not impede the Regional Protection Force, but it must also understand that continued disregard for its citizens will not be tolerated by the Council. We wanted that to be explicit in the text, so I am being very explicit now.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): Angola voted in favour of resolution 2327 (2016), renewing the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), keeping the Security Council's commitment to the country and its people. In fact, the situation in South Sudan has been, over the years, a matter of great concern for the Security Council, which authorized the deployment of a peacekeeping mission, operating in a very difficult and challenging environment. We welcome the commitment of the Mission staff and pay tribute to those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in trying to bring peace and stability to South Sudan. Angola reiterates its full support for the Mission, its leadership and staff.

Angola supported the resolution, although we would like to raise a number of concerns. The main purpose was to renew the mandate of the peacekeeping mission for another 12 months, incorporating the Regional Protection Force. The inclusion of provisions pertaining to sanctions regimes and the management of the hybrid court to be established by the African Union, among other issues, remain an issue of contention among Council members.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development met recently at the level of Heads of State and Government and underscored that

"[an] arms embargo or sanctions on South Sudan will not provide the solution being sought for permanent peace and stability in the country, stressing that what is required is dialogue, reconciliation, and commitment by all South Sudanese parties to fully implement the peace agreement".

Angola believes that the current situation in South Sudan must be addressed through a meaningful political dialogue, leading to the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan as the primary focus of the Mission's mandate, including a permanent ceasefire and provisions to address accountability and the root causes of the conflict, leading to sustainable peace in South Sudan.

Lastly, we call on all South Sudanese parties to cease hostilities, take the necessary actions to protect the civilian population and engage in good faith in political negotiations to address their disputes. That is the only path to fulfil the aspirations of the people of South Sudan for peace and development.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay has just voted in favour of resolution 2327 (2016) on the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Republic of South Sudan, as we believe it urgent to continue renewing the commitment of the Security Council to peace, security and stability in South Sudan, given the delicate situation it is facing.

Although the delegation of Uruguay had no major objection to the proposed text, we appreciate that the views expressed by different members could have been taken further into account during the negotiation process. Looking to the future, and in order to avoid last-minute emergencies and tensions, Uruguay believes that members of the Council need to have a frank and friendly talk leading to an improvement in negotiation proceedings and in the quality of the product — in other words, the resolutions that we adopt.

Furthermore, resolution 2327 (2016), through detailed preambular paragraphs, makes a correct diagnosis of the situation in South Sudan, which is also in line with the findings of the Security Council mission in September, when we had the opportunity to make contact with the authorities and representatives of civil society from South Sudan. The Security Council has devoted a lot of time this year to considering the situation in the country and is ready to carry on doing so, but the most important thing was to provide a mandate that ensures continuity and contributes to some of the salient needs for the political development of South Sudan, including the peace process, respect for the human rights of the citizens of South Sudan, providing the country with stability and cooperating with the authorities in promoting the governability of South Sudan.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Spain.

Spain welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2327 (2016), renewing the mandate of one of the most important peacekeeping missions. The situation in South Sudan continues to be of great concern. The country is mired in a severe political, economic, humanitarian and security crisis. As if that were not enough, there are indications that the conflict may well become an ethnic war. Everybody here, and especially the authorities of South Sudan themselves, must do their utmost in order to reverse the situation.

We take due note of the commitment made by the Transitional Government of National Unity to the swift deployment and full operationaliztion of the Regional Protection Force. We hope that that will now move from words into deeds, and that the contingent will be able to fulfil its mandate as quickly as possible. It is essential that UNMISS be able to operate without restrictions in order to comply with its mandate, especially with regard to the protection of civilians and the safe, unrestricted delivery of humanitarian assistance.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malok (South Sudan): Mr. President, since this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor to address the Council under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on your leadership of the Council this month and to pledge our full cooperation. I would also like to acknowledge the role of your predecessor in leading the Council last month. I would be remiss if I did not thank you and the members of the Council for giving me the opportunity to address the Council on this issue of vital importance to my country.

First and foremost, I would also like to take this opportunity, on behalf of my Government, to welcome the appointment of Mr. David Shearer by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as his next Special

Representative for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). I would like to assure him of the full cooperation of my Government in his endeavours for the entire time that he will be leading UNMISS in South Sudan. In addition, we highly appreciate the positive role played by the former Special Representative for South Sudan and Head of UNMISS, Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, and we want to tell her that she ran a good race during her tenure with UNMISS in South Sudan. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

We welcome today's renewal and extension of the mandate of UNMISS for 12 months, during which the Mission will be called upon to undertake the core functions of protecting civilians, monitoring and investigating human rights, creating the conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and lastly, supporting the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, signed on 26 August 2015. That is a good approach.

Our consistent support for the extension of the UNMISS mandate is an indication of our appreciation for the contribution the Mission is making in our country. We consider that to be a good symbol of improvement of our situation and our relations with the United Nations and the Security Council, following the recent agreement of the Republic of South Sudan to implement the Joint Communiqué signed by the Transitional Government of National Unity and the Security Council on 4 September, concerning the deployment of the Regional Protection Force without conditions.

However, I must express my delegation's disappointment that our concerns and those of some members of the Security Council were not taken into consideration, which goes against the spirit of cooperation. The Council continues to deliberate on the important issues of peace and security in South Sudan without adequate consultation with the African region. Recently, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Assembly of Heads of State and Government held its twenty-ninth Extraordinary Summit on 9 December in Addis Ababa, at which it underscored in its communiqué that:

> "an arms embargo or sanctions on South Sudan will not provide the solution being sought for permanent peace and stability in the country and stresses that what is required is dialogue, reconciliation and commitment by all South Sudanese parties to faithfully implement the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan and for the region and the international community to support them".

The Government of South Sudan continues to oppose the negative threats of sanctions and punishment, which can only undermine cooperation. The call for the imposition of an arms embargo and targeted sanctions on senior Government officials in South Sudan will only weaken the Government's ability to execute its constitutional mandate and give the upper hand to armed groups, given the long history of war in the country, which left small arms and light weapons in the hands of civilians.

Despite the international community's skepticism about the will of South Sudanese leaders to bring an end to the conflict that is devastating their country and inflicting death and suffering on their people, we have always recognized that we share the same objective of consolidating peace, security and stability in our country. These elements are fundamental for the reconstruction, rehabilitation and socioeconomic development of a country that has been at war for far too long. President Salva Kiir Mayardit, in his statement on 14 December to the National Legislative Assembly, reiterated his commitment to implementing the Peace Agreement in letter and spirit. He announced intentions to launch a national dialogue that will include all stakeholders in the country. This dialogue will be led by eminent statesmen who are trusted, genuine and credible.

As the President, it is understandable that much of the responsibility for the state of affairs in the country would fall on Salva Kiir Mayardit, but it is obvious that he has been very accommodating and compromising. This has not been adequately acknowledged, let alone appreciated. Contrary to what most presidents would do, President Salva Kiir has demonstrated leadership and conceded a great deal for the cause of peace.

Republican orders issued by President Salva Kiir Mayardit should leave no doubt about his determination to do all he can to end this senseless tragedy for his country. He has recently declared a unilateral ceasefire, with instructions to the National Army to fight only in self-defence. He has granted amnesty to those who have taken up arms against the State. He has created a ministerial committee of the Transitional Government

of National Unity charged with implementing the Joint Communiqué and resolution 2304 (2016), and established a national planning committee and a humanitarian high-level committee.

All these steps are intended to address the relevant aspects of the crises faced by the country. Their active coordinating role should be recognized and respected by our international partners to ensure more effective partnership in providing assistance to the country. Close cooperation and partnership between the international community and South Sudan are essential, not only in addressing the many problems faced by the country and achieving positive results but also in enhancing the capacity of the Government to be more effective in the delivery of essential services to the people of South Sudan.

To conclude, the Government of the Republic of South Sudan reaffirms its commitment to working with UNMISS and the international community at large. What the Republic of South Sudan needs is a positive and constructive agenda that includes restoring complete security and stability; nationwide peace and reconciliation efforts; the strengthening of the security and judicial sectors; and support for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts to help clear guns from the hands of civilians and bring the perpetrators of crimes to justice.

What we do not need is the negative threat of sanctions and punishment, which can only undermine the spirit of cooperation.

The meeting rose at 4.55pm.

United Nations S/PV.7841

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7841st meeting

Monday, 19 December 2016, 9 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Martins
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Ukraine	Mr. Kyslytsya
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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16-44801 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/1071, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2328 (2016).

The meeting rose at 9.10 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7842

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7842nd meeting

Monday, 19 December 2016, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. González de Linares Palou	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Casimiro
	China	Mr. Li Yongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Coleman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991

Letter dated 11 November 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/959)

Letter dated 17 November 2016 from the President of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/976)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991

Letter dated 11 November 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/959)

Letter dated 17 November 2016 from the President of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/976))

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/1054, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted Uruguay.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/959, which contains the text of a letter dated 11 November 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, and to document S/2016/976, which contains the text of a letter dated 17 November 2016 from the President of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2329 (2016).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Security Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation has often expressed its concern over the unacceptable delays in the judicial proceedings of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the prolongation of its work beyond the limits set by resolution 1966 (2010). Our opinion of that has not changed.

At the same time, we note that the Tribunal's new leadership has managed to avoid additional delays, for the first time in several years. The adoption today of resolution 2329 (2016) reflects the commitment of the ICTY to the task of finalizing its work by the end of 2017 and contains important provisions ensuring that the current extension of the mandates of the judges and prosecutors will be the last. Those conditions form the basis of our decision to vote in favour of the resolution.

I would like to stress that the Council's appeals to the Tribunal to shorten the ongoing judicial proceedings are as urgent as ever, and we hope that the Tribunal's leadership will make every effort to that end in order to ensure that the two remaining cases are finalized even before the official deadline.

The meeting rose at 10.05 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7843

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7843rd meeting

Monday, 19 December 2016, 10.05 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. González de Linares Palou	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Coleman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 30 August to 17 November 2016 (S/2016/1037)

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16-44813 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 30 August to 17 November 2016 (S/2016/1037)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/1064, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/1037, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 30 August to 17 November 2016.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2330 (2016).

The meeting rose at 10.10 a.m.

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United Nations S/PV.7844

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7844th meeting
Monday, 19 December 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. González de Linares Palou	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Coleman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2016/1049)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-44819 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2016/1049)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Sweden and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; and Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Her Excellency Ms. Joanne Adamson, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

I wish to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2016/1049, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings from Mr. Yamamoto, Mr. Fedotov and Ambassador Gerard Van Bohemen, Permanent Representative of New Zealand in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).

I now give the floor to Mr. Yamamoto.

Mr. Yamamoto: The National Unity Government marked its second anniversary with a continued effort towards advancing its reform agenda and enhancing public services. Despite security challenges and some political volatility, I continue to see opportunities and hope in Afghanistan. The Afghan Government demonstrated unity at the recent Warsaw Summit and at the Brussels Conference, while stressing its shared commitment to security, development and reform priorities. Afghan leaders have continued working to overcome their differences in order to advance the Government's reform agenda. The message from the international community sent at the highest level was clear: Afghanistan will not stand alone. The significant international financial commitments, in both security and development terms, allow Afghanistan to achieve greater stability and self-reliance.

I welcome the reconstitution of the electoral management bodies, which must advance electoral reforms and preparations for elections. It is essential to restore public confidence in the democratic process in Afghanistan, which provides an important opportunity to take steps in that direction. The commencement of prosecutions by the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre shows the Government's seriousness in tackling corruption. The Citizens Charter was adopted to enable a more systematic approach to eradicate poverty and provide services to the people of Afghanistan.

Afghan citizens are returning home in record numbers. In the past six months alone, the country has received hundreds of thousands of returnees, from both Pakistan and Iran. While those returnees are being welcomed back to Afghanistan, they face an uncertain future, alongside the internally displaced persons, including half a million newly displaced just this year. Over 1.5 million people are on the move this year. It is likely that the coming year will likely see similar numbers of people. The sheer scale of that population movement will necessarily bring with it strains and pressure on the economy and on social services and could further swell the number of those seeking employment.

I welcome the swift response of the international community to the United Nations appeal for the provision of immediate lifesaving assistance for displaced persons and returnees. I also wish to acknowledge the work that is being undertaken by the Government to put in place programmes that will enable both displaced persons and returnees to integrate into the economy and with their host communities.

The longer-term needs of integration must be addressed with urgency if we are to prevent more people sinking into absolute poverty. The scale of return will require further international support and flexibility in

the use of existing funding mechanisms. Meanwhile, we must make greater efforts to ensure due recognition of the voluntary nature of return, and for the process of return to be undertaken with dignity and respect.

Refugees return to Afghanistan with hopes. Despite all the efforts by the international community and the Government, a better future is not possible without peace. In 2016, thousands and thousands of Afghans have been killed in the conflict, and tens of thousands more have been wounded. Such human suffering and tragedy are unacceptable. The conflict also erodes the living conditions of people and deprives the country of opportunities for development and growth. This year, we saw a decrease of approximately 50 per cent in economic investment, which is needed to achieve a sustainable future. The international commitments for development will not be able to deliver their full potential in the absence of peace. Financial resources that are spent on the conflict could be utilized for the economic prosperity of Afghanistan.

We all know that the conflict in Afghanistan has no military solution. Once again, I call upon the Taliban to commit to direct talks with the Afghan Government, without preconditions. The Taliban leadership must reconsider the notion that their objectives can be achieved only on the battlefield. At stake is the future of the Afghan people and the country. Are the differences really irreconcilable? Are compromise and accommodation really not possible?

All Afghans must come together and work through their problems and find ways to accommodate their differences, for their own joint future. There are issues of mutual interests and high priorities to all parties, such as lessening the number of civilian casualties. Identifying such common interests could be a starting point for dialogue. The vast majority of Afghans believe that their country should be a sovereign, united, Islamic country, free from interference by any foreign Powers. That basic agreement on fundamental principles should make it possible to reach a peace agreement, as long as countries in the region are prepared to play their part in a positive, supportive way.

It takes courage to enter into a peace process. It is not an admission of defeat. It is a recognition of reality. An endless war will ruin the country and harm its people. The only path to a meaningful peace is through an intra-Afghan dialogue. The eventual process must be inclusive, involving Afghans from every stratum of society, including women and young people. Women in particular can play a crucial role in helping to shape a lasting peace.

The peace agreement with Hizb-i Islami shows that the Government is prepared to negotiate on key issues such as the release of prisoners, the lifting of sanctions and the group's integration into the political life of Afghanistan. The fact that the agreement was reached is a demonstration of its serious intentions, and its successful implementation should address any remaining doubts and help to unite Afghans, and could pave the way for further peace agreements. I welcome the Government's assurances that the rights of Afghans, including victims of gross violations of human rights, will not be compromised in the implementation of the peace agreement.

Peace and stability in Afghanistan are not in the interest of Afghanistan alone; other countries in the region will also benefit on both the security and economic fronts. I am encouraged by their active efforts to assist Afghanistan with its social, economic and human-resources development. Impressive investments are being made in regional infrastructure development. The progress in that area was reflected in the outcome of the sixth Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference in Amritsar, where we also saw the countries of the region concur on improving cooperation on their counter-terrorism efforts. But can we not collaborate and cooperate more in order to put an end to the conflict and long-standing human suffering in Afghanistan? I urge every country of the region to ask itself what else it can do to help create an environment conducive to peace in Afghanistan and the region. There are many possible areas of cooperation and steps that they can take to improve the prospects for peace, such as increased consultations, exchanges of information and people-to-people contacts.

I am encouraged by the positive messages of support for an Afghan-led peace process from the countries of the region, and I look forward to seeing them produce positive results. We, the United Nations, remain committed to working for peace in Afghanistan in cooperation with all concerned.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Yamamoto for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fedotov.

Mr. Fedotov: I am grateful for this opportunity to update the Council on the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) against illicit drugs in Afghanistan and their impact on health, development and security. Since my last briefing (see S/PV.7802), UNODC has published its *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2016*, referred to in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/1049), which shows a worrying reversal of the efforts to combat this persistent problem. Opium poppy cultivation has grown by 10 per cent and production by 43 per cent, an increase driven by a 30 per cent rise in the average opium yield. In the past year, the number of provinces that are poppy-free has gone down from 14 to 13, while eradication, which has dropped by 91 per cent, is in free fall.

The efforts of UNODC and its partners in Afghanistan are continuing against that background and that of the bitter ongoing insurgency. The Brussels Conference on Afghanistan and the resulting communiqué underlined the importance of these activities. Countries and organizations committed to a sustained and integrated approach to dealing with the production and trafficking of illicit drugs and precursor chemicals. The Conference highlighted the importance of fighting organized crime, including money laundering, corruption and the financing of terrorism, as well as of treating and rehabilitating drug users. The communiqué expressed the international community's determination to counter all forms of terrorism and extremism.

UNODC activities, delivered through our integrated and comprehensive projects and programmes, are targeting those and other challenges. Our country programme for Afghanistan, linked to our Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries, is assisting in building the capacity of the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics and the narcotics police. Earlier this month, I visited the Domodedevo Project, supported by Russia and Japan, which is using professional training to improve the capacity of Afghanistan's narcotics police. UNODC is promoting cooperation in the region through the Regional Programme, its Triangular and Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan Initiatives, the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre and the Gulf Cooperation Council Criminal Information Centre to Combat Drugs.

In order to build links between the regional bodies operating along the major opiate trafficking routes, UNODC has introduced a networking-the-networks initiative designed to leverage information-sharing. Our work forms part of an overall interregional drug-control response to illicit trafficking. Its activities include support, including in the field, for the Paris Pact Initiative. UNODC recently established an air cargo unit at the Kabul international airport. Afghanistan is now one of the first countries in the world to implement the air-cargo segment of the UNODC-World Customs Organization Container Control Programme.

In the essential area of health, UNODC supports treatment services founded on scientific evidence and human rights, especially for vulnerable children and young people exposed to drugs, as well as their families.

Afghan heroin is also linked to terrorism and the insurgency. The bulk of opium cultivation takes place in areas controlled by the Taliban, and they receive tens of millions of dollars through their taxes on drug trafficking. UNODC welcomes the Afghan Government's decision to develop a national action plan on violent extremism, and we are helping to implement it. While we appreciate donors' interest in alternative development projects being carried out in Afghanistan in cooperation with other United Nations agencies and the Government, much more needs to be done. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is driving momentum for more ambitious alternative development projects for Afghan farmers who are currently growing illicit crops. Illicit drugs fuel corruption. UNODC, as a guardian of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, is working with Afghan counterparts to draft a new, comprehensive anti-corruption law based on international standards and best practices.

Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda promotes peaceful and inclusive societies. UNODC is working with the relevant Afghan authorities to enhance the capacity of financial intelligence units and regulatory and criminal justice institutions to analyse, detect, investigate and prosecute cases of economic crime. The new National Peace and Development Framework and the national drug action plan underscore the Afghan Government's willingness and determination to counter illicit production and trafficking and to reduce demand.

UNODC will continue to work over the long term with partners, including the Afghan Government, to counter illicit drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism in Afghanistan and in Western and Central Asia, as well

as along the main drug trafficking routes to the rest of the world. In its pursuit of that strategy, UNODC is helping to integrate those activities into economic and national security planning. Afghanistan is hard pressed under the impact of illicit drugs, and I call on the international community to remain fully committed to helping to alleviate that destructive threat.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Fedotov for that briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Van Bohemen.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I thank Special Representative Yamamoto and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their support of the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011). Close coordination with UNAMA is important to the overall effectiveness of the 1988 sanctions regime.

The 1988 Sanctions Committee aims to deter the Taliban and associates through tools such as an assets freeze, a travel ban and an arms embargo. At the same time, the 1988 sanctions regime is intended to support the peace and reconciliation process, including through the use of the delisting process and the process for granting exemptions to enable a list of persons to engage in peace and reconciliation negotiations and other approved activities.

The existence of the 1988 sanctions regime matters to the Taliban. Removal from what the Taliban call the United Nations blacklist is consistently in the top three demands of the group. The Taliban also follow developments in the 1988 Sanctions Committee closely, often issuing statements on reports of the Monitoring Team and activities of the Committee. However, despite the sanctions measures, the Taliban have retained the ability to conduct attacks on Afghan forces, the Afghan people and the international presence in Afghanistan. The latest report (see S/2016/842) of the Monitoring Team, which was presented to the Committee in October, outlines how the Taliban continue their offensive against the Government of Afghanistan following the leadership transfer from Akhtar Mohammad Mansour and Haibatullah Akhundzada in May of this year.

The Taliban's positions on peace talks with the Government of Afghanistan have hardened and clashes between the Taliban and Government forces have increased between 10 and 13 per cent, as compared to those in 2015. Such clashes continue to be funded mainly by the narcotics economy and the illegal extraction of natural resources. The situation is also complicated by the presence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and foreign terrorist fighters in Afghanistan.

While there are many structures and frameworks in place, the implementation of the sanctions measures can be uneven. The Committee continues to receive reports of listed Taliban travelling without approved exemptions from the Committee. That issue clearly needs to be addressed. The Committee would also like to encourage Member States to play a more active role in providing information that would help to keep the sanctions list as up-to-date as possible. If Member States provide that information, it will support their own implementation efforts. War could also be done to target narcotics smugglers financially supporting the Taliban.

The Taliban's income from narcotics is estimated at around $400 million per year. Cutting off that financial stream could have a significant impact on the Taliban's ability to resource its offensive against the Government of Afghanistan. Six of the Committee's meetings this year were focused on the nexus between narcotics smuggling and the Taliban. The Committee received briefings on counter-narcotics efforts from Afghanistan's Deputy Interior Minister, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Monitoring Team. Such efforts help to identify individuals who may be suitable for designation on the 1988 list.

The overall effectiveness of the 1988 sanctions measures also relies on close coordination with the Government of Afghanistan and with the region. That is one of the reasons I recently travelled to Afghanistan as Chair of the 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committee and the Security Council Committee establishsed pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, to engage directly with interlocutors and the Afghan Government. I was pleased with the level of engagement the delegation received while in Kabul, including meetings with President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, the Minister of the Interior and the Governor of the Central Bank of Afghanistan.

The meetings in Kabul showed that there is potential for greater use of the 1988 sanctions regime to deter the Taliban and to support the peace process. The legal frameworks are in place to implement the sanctions measures, for example, the Central Bank of Afghanistan outlined a comprehensive framework for the tracing and freezing of assets of listed individuals and entities. However, such structures are effective only against listed individuals, who are identifiable. There are many associates of the Taliban who are not on the list and others lacking sufficient identifiers. Such structures are also effective only within Afghanistan. Cross-border flows of money, narcotics, arms and foreign terrorist fighters are challenges that extend to the wider region.

The Committee therefore welcomes the various commitments made by the Government of Afghanistan during the visit to engage more actively with the sanctions regime, including to provide the names of narcotics smugglers who financially support the Taliban and to request the listing of the Taliban leadership. In turn, the Committee is working on providing forms to assist with applying for exemptions from the assets freeze and travel-ban measures and hopes to have those available on its website shortly. The Committee looks forward to continued close engagement with UNAMA, Afghanistan and regional States, under the chairmanship of Kazakhstan for 2017-2018.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Van Bohemen for his briefing.

On behalf of all the members of the Security Council, I should like to thank the three briefers for their useful and informative reports.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan): Let me congratulate Spain on its successful leadership of the Security Council this month. We wish to thank Ambassador Román Oyarzun Marchesi and his team at the Spanish Mission for their dedicated efforts as penholder for Afghanistan during the past two years and welcome Japan's assumption of this important task. I thank the outgoing Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his recent report (S/2016/1049) on the situation in Afghanistan. We are grateful to Ambassador Tadamichi Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, for his comprehensive briefing and outstanding leadership of the United Nations work in Afghanistan.

Two years after the three-pronged transition, with focus on reforms and renewed international commitments, Afghanistan has defied odds by standing on its own and managing complex challenges, notwithstanding a high price in lost lives and denied opportunities. From the perspective of security, in recent months our armed forces have proved their strength by repulsing unprecedented waves of attacks in various provinces. Economically, Afghanistan's regional connectivity has been growing fast. And politically, our vibrant course of democratization continues with electoral reform on track. However, with a high rate of return of refugees, coupled with the increased number of internally displaced persons resulting from terrorist attacks, we have fresh humanitarian challenges ahead of us this winter and beyond.

In 2016, parallel to the challenges, we witnessed significant developments that reflected strong international military and civilian support for Afghanistan. In July, our international partners at the NATO Warsaw Summit pledged continued assistance towards the sustainability of our security forces. In September, the Council reaffirmed its full support to Afghanistan through presidential statement S/PRST/2016/14. In October, the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan renewed the partnership for prosperity and peace between our country and the international community. In November, the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 71/9 entitled, "The situation in Afghanistan", which reiterated the commitment of the international community for a stable Afghanistan. Those developments represent the clear consolidation of international consensus on Afghanistan, for which we are deeply grateful. On behalf of my Government and my people, let me thank all Member States for their positive contributions to Afghanistan's stability and progress. In particular, we are grateful to the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom and Turkey for forging the Warsaw Summit consensus on Afghanistan, and the European Union for galvanizing renewed international development commitments for our country.

Effective counter-terrorism requires a clear regional and global security architecture and constructive engagement among the relevant stakeholders. For too long, terror has found a comfort zone in the occasional tectonic shifts and grinds of security fault lines,

along with negative rivalries of regional and global powers. Scattered, fragmented and slow counter-terrorism measures have been exploited by terrorists to manoeuvre, spread violence and create discord among people. In the face of growing terrorism worldwide, we must increase trust, collaboration and coordination among relevant Member States for a comprehensive response based on the rule of law and established international norms.

In that context, any kind of outside contact with the Taliban or other such groups without the prior knowledge and approval of the Government of Afghanistan is seen as a legitimization of terror, a direct breach of our sovereignty and a clear contravention of the United Nations sanctions regimes and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, which will not be tolerated. Fighting terror with terror, no matter what the justification, is a sign of weakness of the civilized world and a return to impasse and stagnation. Certainly, our people will suffer most from this irrational and reckless policy.

In the campaign against terrorism, Afghanistan ought to be a symbol of international cooperation. We welcome the regional and global convergence of legitimate interests in our security, political stability and development. The surest way to protect those interests in Afghanistan is to desist from ill-conceived attempts at regional orchestration of Afghanistan's insecurity, enhance official State-to-State cooperation and support our national security forces.

At the peak of the international military presence in 2012, the casualty rate of coalition forces was over 400, and the approximate cost of war amounted to around $110 billion; in 2016, the casualty rate has dropped to 16, and financial costs are estimated to be less than one-eleventh of that figure. Hence, today our forces are at the forefront of countering terrorism on behalf of the world and need to be fully supported.

It must be noted that in October and November, various provinces of Afghanistan became the target of terrorist attacks that are unprecedented in our country's modern history. The enemy's intention was to establish a parallel geography for the Taliban, but the commitment and bravery of our security forces prevented terrorists from realizing their wicked ambitions.

Due to its sensitive geostrategic location, Afghanistan firmly believes in regionalism and multilateral diplomacy. The sixth Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, held two weeks ago in Amritsar, acknowledged the support that terrorism derives in our region and called for the dismantling of regional terrorist sanctuaries and safe havens. Further, it called upon all States to take action against those terrorist entities in accordance with their respective national counter-terrorism policies, their international obligations and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The Conference welcomed and supported Afghanistan's initiative in taking the lead in exploring a regional counter-terrorism strategy, in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations. At Amritsar, President Ghani proposed an Asian and international mechanism to verify cross-frontier activities and terrorist operations. Verification of nefarious activities would present our neighbour hard evidence to undercut their plausible deniability and blame games, and shift the focus to where it should be — a unified response to countering terrorism.

At the United Nations level, consideration of new three-tier measures for a more effective counter-terrorism strategy is needed. During our debates, we ought to address the impact of negative State rivalries and State use of violence in pursuit of political objectives on the growth of terrorism. At an operational level, we need to refine and enrich relevant existing resolutions or adopt new resolutions to target the drivers of such policies within State structures. At the implementation level, effectively enforcing the counter-terrorism resolutions, including the sanctions regimes on the Taliban, Al-Qaida and Da'esh, and those who use the State apparatus to nurture them, can have a significant impact on war and peace in Afghanistan. We want the timely inclusion of select irredeemable Taliban leaders on the sanctions list and a review of those delisted so far. There is an urgent need for increased and more meaningful interaction between the United Nations counter-terrorism bodies and Afghan security agencies. We welcome the Sanctions Committee's November visit to Afghanistan, where relevant issues were discussed with the senior leadership.

Winter in Afghanistan begins in two days. For the Taliban and their supporters in our neighbourhood, that usually marks the official end of their fighting season. Most Taliban militiamen return to the warmth of madrasas in Pakistan for rest and recuperation and to refuel for the next fighting season. Often, around this time of year, the regional orchestrator of violence in our country reverts to the notion of peace talks. Thus

their seasonality and tactical use of war and peace continues, leaving little room for genuine peace efforts. Nevertheless, we once again urge all Afghan Taliban groups and their foreign supporters to enter into genuine peace talks with the Government of Afghanistan. In that endeavour, we recognize the importance of the role of neighbouring countries, in particular Pakistan, and other regional partners.

We have made some progress towards the implementation of the peace agreement signed with Hezb-i-Islami (Gulbuddin) on 29 September. The cessation of violence with former belligerent members of the group has held for nearly three months. Their disarmament and reintegration require careful planning. The agreement presents an opportunity to put the future together, not justify the past. Making the agreement work will necessitate collective and careful efforts from all stakeholders, across domestic and international spectrums. Those who want to take advantage of this historic opportunity should refrain from all derogatory, divisive and xenophobic activities. The Government pardon is not a justification of their past violent activities and should neither be misused nor abused. It is noteworthy: the people of Afghanistan have the full right to seek justice, in accordance with their fundamental rights. We expect the implementation of the agreement to improve security, strengthen the political stability and national unity of the Afghan people and set a good precedent in the peace process.

Recently, President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah have displayed a renewed level of consensus in the work of the national unity Government, in particular in relation to the appointment of new commissioners at the electoral bodies, which marks a decisive step forward to strengthening the credibility, transparency and integrity of our future elections. We expect the Independent Election Commission to announce the date of our upcoming parliamentary and district council elections in the near future. Talks on other subjects are still ongoing to strengthen our political stability and democratic process.

Afghanistan has progressed steadily on the path of economic cooperation through regional connectivity and tangible development projects. The recent inauguration of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan railway, following the arrival of a cargo train from China, and the construction of the Iran-Afghanistan railway, together with the forthcoming cargo air corridor between Afghanistan and India, are reviving centuries-old trade routes that will help revitalize the regional economy. However, insecurity presents a primary obstacle to our economic reform and infrastructure-building agenda.

The Taliban's recent statement of support for major development projects has no genuine basis. As mentioned, insecurity created by the Taliban undercuts economic development in the country and challenges regional connectivity. On 17 December, just a couple of days ago, the Taliban targeted five female airport personnel in Kandahar airport. That is their real nature. Any expression of support will be deemed legitimate only when expressed through deeds, such as the immediate cessation of violence and their genuine joining of the peace process. Compared to previous years, the rate of civilian casualties has gone down marginally in Afghanistan. However, terrorists continue to attack soft targets mercilessly, as manifested by the rising percentage of child casualties this year. The recent targeting of religious gatherings was aimed at stoking ethnic and sectarian tensions among our people. But let me reiterate that Afghans stand united in the face of such divisive strategies.

The Government of Afghanistan, in collaboration with the United Nations and other international partners, continues to work on creating equal opportunities for women, pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000). We have also improved workplace conditions for women and strengthened the legal framework for their physical protection. In that regard, the recently revised penal code is among our other recent achievements. We are highly determined to bring all human rights violators to justice, including those in the highest positions of Government. It is important that national and international stakeholders further strengthen the independence of the Afghan judiciary without politicizing or ethnicizing the course of justice.

During the past 10 months, Afghanistan has witnessed the return of nearly 1 million of its nationals. Increased policing and uncertainty over their status in Pakistan, including the fear of eviction, have led to a huge surge of returnees. That fact, along with internal displacements resulting from conflict, might exacerbate the already difficult humanitarian crisis as winter approaches. We invite the international community to support the flash appeal of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to provide immediate life-saving assistance while we continue to work on a comprehensive solution.

Recently, we have initiated a string of consultations with relevant line ministries, United Nations agencies and other related stakeholders to provide immediate response packages during the winter season to needy returnees and internally displaced persons. In the broader context, we are seeking long-term, viable solutions for those problems. In that context, the further assistance of the international community remains of vital importance.

Our efforts to curb the menace of narcotics and to break its link with criminality are ongoing. In October, the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics, along with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, released the executove summary of the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2016*, which noted an increase in poppy production. However, our counter-narcotics operations continue unabated with recent unprecedented seizures. One thing is clear — insecurity creates fertile ground for drug production. We maintain the view that a viable solution to the narcotics problem must be based on the principle of shared responsibility. A verification regime of cultivation, production, trafficking and demand would probably prove that Afghanistan beneficits the least from drug profits.

We have reached the end of an eventful year, with key developments that signify an enormous leap forward for Afghanistan. The regional and international consensus has reached new heights, as reflected in the Warsaw NATO Summit, the Brussels Conference and Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference, and the unanimous adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/9 on Afghanistan. Together, those events have established a firm foundation to enhance our strategic cooperation into the new year.

The Council and the international community are well aware that terrorism remains a constant threat to the security of all peoples and societies. That said, let us approach the coming year with a new confidence and commitment to secure a stable and self-reliant Afghanistan. We must not forget that our joint partnership is in fact a strategic investment for a more safe and prosperous world order.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council. To enable the Security Council to make good use of the time available, I ask members to restrict their statements to five minutes and thank them for their cooperation.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): Ukraine aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union. Meanwhile, I would like to make a few points in my national capacity.

Three months ago, the Council discussed the situation in Afghanistan (see S/PV.7771) and adopted presidential statement S/PRST/2016/14, in support of the country's security, economic and development challenges. Has it had a positive impact on the ground? To a certain degree, it has.

First, some encouraging progress has been achieved in countering corruption and deterring the terrorist threat. Secondly, the Brussels Conference, held in October, secured pledges in support of Afghanistan's State-building and socioeconomic development. Thirdly, a peace deal that was signed with one of moderate armed factions, Hezb-i Islami (Gulbuddin), became a useful contribution to the restoration of normalcy and the reconciliation in the territories under that group's control. Fourthly, regional cooperation was strengthened by investment and infrastructure projects that laid the foundation for improving Afghanistan's trade capacities and building a business-friendly environment. Fifthly, efforts were redoubled to counter narcotics trafficking and production, in particular by promoting saffron as a substitute crop for poppies.

Despite those developments, much remains to be done. Rivalry among high-level Afghan officials and political tensions between the parliamentary and legislative branches, as well as another postponement of long-awaited parliamentary elections, directly affect the country's ability to adequately promote good governance, the rule of law, anti-corruption measures and human rights. We believe that it is high time for all Afghan stakeholders to demonstrate real unity in their efforts to achieve sustainable and comprehensive peace and national reconciliation.

However, the prospects for those endeavours remain dim. The repeated flat refusal of the Taliban leaders to negotiate has undercut attempts of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group on the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Process to create an environment conducive to a peace process. In that regard, we see the need for the Quadrilateral Coordination Group to find common ground with representatives of the Taliban's moderate wing.

In this Chamber, we have often heard statements to the effect that the national reconciliation process

must be Afghan-owned and Afghan-led. At the same time, we have seen continued attempts behind the back of the Government of Afghanistan to negotiate with the Taliban and even to grant the terrorists safe haven, train them and provide them military assistance. In that light, calls to lift the Security Council sanctions on the Taliban leadership as an incentive to bring it back to the negotiations table appear rather unconvincing, to say the least. That is particularly revelatory when such calls echo similar demands by the same terrorist organization.

We find it unacceptable that, six months after his appointment, the new leader of the Taliban is still not included on the United Nations sanctions list. In that regard, we support the relevant call just made by the delegation of Afghanistan. Ukraine believes that the sanctions are an effective tool in persuading terrorists to renounce their aggression against the Afghan nation and earnestly participate in peace negotiations. Their removal from the list should be possible only when their deeds match their words. That means the disarmament of combat units, the restoration of peace, and non-interference in the functioning of public institutions, as was the case with the Hezb-i Islami (Gulbuddin).

Regional cooperation should also focus on finding ways to effectively disrupt the Taliban and other terrorist groups' financing by suppressing the narcotics trade. With regard to the latter, the recent findings of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which are contained in its *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2016*, are alarming. Regardless of national and international efforts to combat the narcotics threat, the total area of opium poppy cultivation has further increased, coinciding with a major decrease in activities aimed at eradicating it. What is also extremely worrying is that, according to reports, farmers continue to resist such suppression operations by directly attacking eradication teams, even within the Government-controlled areas.

The protection of civilians in Afghanistan continues to be an increasingly complex challenge. Although the Government announced a national policy to mitigate civilian casualties, the number of collateral victims, especially among women and children, is still growing. And the causes, in particular the indiscriminate shelling and bombing, are attributable to both parties in the conflict. Beyond any doubt, fighting the terrorist threat is a top priority. Yet it can hardly be seen as a victory when the number of neutralized terrorists equals the number of civilians who have lost their lives in the course of the counter-terrorist operations concerned.

We urge the Afghan Government to ensure that all such violations of international humanitarian law are thoroughly investigated, with the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and that the victims and their families are provided with the appropriate remedies. The implementation of the national action plan on women and peace and security is also of paramount importance for ensuring a stable future for the country through the suspension of gender-based violence and the elevation of women as full and equal partners. Moreover, the deteriorating displacement crisis in Afghanistan requires urgent attention. The Afghan authorities should address the needs of internally displaced persons and returnees, including by urgently scaling up humanitarian aid to provide them access to basic services and support their sustainable reintegration.

Without any doubt, there are numerous obstacles that make it difficult for Afghanistan to resolve on their own most of the challenges I have mentioned. That is why the international community has to continue assisting the country, which is in need. I hope that in future debates the list of problems that I mentioned today will be much shorter, as some of them will have already been addressed by the Afghan Government.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are following the security situation in Afghanistan very closely. We are concerned about its sudden and growing deterioration, especially in the north of the country, in which the Taliban has recently become increasingly active. The elimination of the Taliban leader, Mullah Mansoor, has led to a strengthening of the influence of the irreconcilable radicals, which only exacerbates the current situation in the country. The recent attacks by militants against the United States military base at Bagram and the German Consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif are stark cases in point.

We support the policy of the Government of Afghanistan aimed at achieving national reconciliation. We stand ready to provide assistance towards making progress in the negotiation process, including through a flexible approach to the possible easing of the sanctions regime of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), if that does not run contrary to the national interests of Afghanistan. We took note that a peace agreement

was signed by the Government of Afghanistan and the Hekmatyar party. Much will depend uon how it is implemented in practice. The main goal of the national reconciliation process is to get the Taliban involved in the process. Thus far, that goal has not been achieved. The Quadrilateral Coordination Group format has not arrived at breakthrough.

Unfortunately, the basic problems that have been facing the international military contingents in the country for the past 15 years remain unresolved. That applies to the previous NATO International Security Assistance Force, which left the country, and the current Resolute Support Mission. We underscore in particular that only the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces can provide for the stabilization of the military and political situation in the country. For that reason, we are providing them with multidimensional support. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation has provided 10,000 automatic rifles and 2.1 million cartridges to them at no charge. Russia has agreed to re-export four Mi-25 helicopter gunships to Afghanistan from India. The Russian Federation will continue to provide assistance in forming a capable Afghan army and police force and continue to train their personnel through Russian line agencies.

Large-scale drug production in Afghanistan poses a serious threat to the very stability of Afghanistan itself, the region and the world in general. Moreover, besides being nefarious in and of itself, narcotics production provides substantial financial support for terrorism. In that regard, we believe that it is necessary to step up the efforts of the international community in combating the Afghan drug trade. We are concerned about the sharp increase in drug crops, including in the north of the country, and a significant increase in this year's opium poppy crop. The fear is that the growth in drug revenue will lead to an even greater surge in terrorist activity.

We do not wholly understand the attempts to diminish the threat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Afghanistan. That is at variance with various assessments, including that of NATO. Some time ago, the commander of the United States and NATO Forces in Afghanistan, General Nicholson, stated that the terrorist group ISIL had intended to create a caliphate in Afghanistan and that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan had joined that cause to form what is known as the Wilayat Khorasan. We expect that that information will be duly reflected and evaluated in the relevant United Nations documentation, including in the quarterly reports to the Secretary-General. According to what we were told by the representatives of the Afghan leadership, the number of ISIL fighters in their country has reached several thousand. There are also confirmed reports of links to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Taliban movement, especially in the north, and the Lashkar-e-Taiba movement. There have also been reports of the presence of ISIL training camps and safe havens in Afghanistan, in which people from the Central Asian States and the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus are being trained, and 700 terrorist families from Syria have already arrived. The intensity of the fighting in Syria and Iraq is leading insurgents to increasingly turn their attention towards Afghanistan as a country in which they can find refuge and establish a new base for expanding their influence in neighbouring countries.

We are rather perplexed by the recent statement by General Nicholson with regard to the support that Russia is allegedly providing the Taliban, thereby undermining Washington, NATO and Kabul's efforts to combat terrorism. That kind of statement reflects an attempt to shift the blame, as we say in my country. We recall the facts indicating that some of our partners are not averse to cooperating with the extremist and terrorist groups in Afghanistan. We are aware of numerous cases in which ISIL fighters were redeployed to the northern provinces of Afghanistan by unmarked helicopters. We must ascertain who is doing that and why. Many questions also remain concerning a massive attack by the Taliban against the administrative centres in the provinces of Badakhshan, Helmand and Farah. Once again, we reiterate that Russia is not conducting any secret negotiations that could undermine the national security of Afghanistan. Our contacts with the representatives of the Taliban are limited to the task of providing for the security of Russian nationals in Afghanistan and are aimed at moving the Taliban towards joining with the process of national reconciliation, while making sure that officials in Kabul maintain a leading role.

We look positively on the fact that the international community reaffirmed its commitment to support Afghanistan at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan in October. We hope that the new financial package will play a positive role. At the same time, we note that the Government of Afghanistan has been presented with a number of conditions. If those conditions are not met, then the volume of the assistance could be reduced. We also note that countries have arrived a better

understanding of the regional context of a settlement of the Afghan conflict, and there is an increase in the number of regional forums that are focused on that issue. At the same time, we think that it is important to make sure that regional actors should assume the leading role in the work of those forums.

We are convinced that assistance to Afghanistan should be carried out through proven existing structures, primarily the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). As is known, Afghanistan received observer status in the SCO in 2012. In 2015, at the SCO Summit in Ufa, Afghanistan officially applied to become a full-fledged member. At this stage, in order to make that process more dynamic, we think that it would be advisable to restore the SCO-Afghanistan contact group. We also see good prospects for strengthening cooperation between the counter-terrorism and anti-narcotics operations of Afghanistan and the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

Ms. Coleman (United States of America): Since we last met to discuss Afghanistan in September (see S/PV.7771), we have been encouraged by notable progress on a number of fronts. Perhaps most significantly, President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah are working together to strengthen the cohesion of the National Unity Government. The transparent and consultative process to select the members of the Independent Election Commission, who were sworn into office on 22 November, demonstrates the commitment of both leaders to build a merit-based, ethnically inclusive Government that is committed to promoting peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.

In spite of the escalating attacks against the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, Government officials and civilians, which were highlighted in Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto's briefing, we commend the Afghan Government for its continued commitment to an inclusive, Afghan-led peace process. The agreement signed on 29 September between the Afghan Government and Hizb-i Islami establishes a precedent for the Government to negotiate a political settlement with armed groups in the interests of Afghans.

We continue to call upon the Taliban to enter into negotiations with the Government. Our message to the Taliban and armed groups is that they will not be able to derail Afghanistan's future through terrorist attacks. However, they are welcome to lay down their arms, negotiate peace and choose to contribute to the future of their country. Meanwhile, recent strong commitments made by the international community are encouraging. The $15.2 billion in development assistance through 2020 that was pledged at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan in October is an important example. Also at the Brussels Conference, President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah underscored their commitment to establishing a functional, accountable and sustainable Government through the implementation of the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework and the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework. We support them in those efforts. Of course, difficult challenges remain.

We are concerned that continued attacks by the Taliban, affiliates of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other armed groups are undermining security and hindering the development that Afghanistan so desperately needs. As we have seen since the beginning of the conflict, the vast majority of victims in those attacks are civilians. In the first nine months of 2016, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 2,562 civilian deaths and 5,835 injuries. Those are tragic additions to a needless toll of death and suffering that includes many Government workers and members of security forces. Since mid-July, Afghanistan has experienced a spike in the number of Afghan refugees and undocumented Afghan migrants returning from Pakistan. To date, 372,000 Afghan refugees have returned from Pakistan and 662,000 undocumented Afghans have returned from Iran and Pakistan. The number of persons internally displaced by the conflict in Afghanistan also continues to increase significantly. We remain concerned by those numbers and the possibility of a humanitarian emergency as winter sets in.

We are also aware that returns to Afghanistan may increase again in the spring, which could potentially overtax an already stressed humanitarian response system. In order to avoid a humanitarian emergency, the return of refugees and migrants to Afghanistan should be voluntary, humane and in line with applicable international law. Amid those clear challenges, some specific steps could help Afghanistan make progress. The National Unity Government needs to institutionalize clear, consultative, multi-ethnic selection processes for ministers and senior officials. Anti-corruption initiatives must demonstrate the ability to hold officials

accountable regardless of rank, in order to ensure that Afghanistan's resources are used for development, security and public services.

After the promising progress made in naming an Independent Election Commission, we look forward to the completion of key election reforms and credible parliamentary elections at the appropriate time. Against that backdrop, UNAMA has played a critical role in helping Afghanistan build its future. In upcoming months, we also encourage UNAMA to help prepare Afghan women to run as political candidates and serve as community leaders.

My last point is that my delegation would like to thank Ambassador Van Bohemen and the delegation of New Zealand for its able stewardship of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities over the past two years. We consider that Committee an important tool, not just for countering the threat of the Taliban, but also for promoting peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks the delegation of Spain for convening this open meeting on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Yury Fedotov, and Ambassador Gerard Van Bohemen for their briefings.

China applauds the unceasing efforts of the Afghan Government to safeguard national stability, promote national reconciliation and advance economic development. On the other hand, we should be cognizant of the fact that Afghanistan still faces grave political, economic and security challenges. The road to peace and development remains long, and the mission remains arduous. It is China's hope that the international community will continue to treat the issue of Afghanistan as a priority and will continue its support and aid to Afghanistan.

The first prong of such an effort involves drastically improving the security situation in Afghanistan. The international community should lend strong support to the capacity-building of the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces, so as to shore up Afghanistan's independent defence and counter-terrorism capabilities and effectively tackle terrorism, transnational crime and drug trafficking. We hope that the rest of the region will continue to cooperate with Afghanistan in the security sector so as to jointly build a secure regional environment.

The second prong involves steadfastly advancing the process of national reconciliation in Afghanistan. The international community should spare no effort to support an inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process and support the efforts of the parties concerned to settle their differences through dialogue. The quadrilateral coordination group, which is made up of Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the United States, will continue to play a positive role in galvanizing that process.

The third prong involves supporting Afghanistan's development guided by Afghanistan's own initiatives. China commends the Afghan Government for drawing up the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework. We hope that the international community will deliver on its aid pledges and provide targeted assistance in line with the development strategy drawn up by the Government of Afghanistan and based on the country's actual needs on the ground.

The fourth prong involves helping Afghanistan integrate into regional economic cooperation. Just recently, the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 71/9, on the situation in Afghanistan. That resolution refers to the importance of the One Belt, One Road initiative — the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Twenty-first century Maritime Silk Road — to the promotion of Afghanistan's economic development and regional cooperation. We hope that the countries concerned will work, as outlined in the resolution, to strengthen regional economic cooperation and connectivity and help Afghanistan join the mighty tide of regional development.

China commends the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and supports the Mission's positive role in helping Afghanistan safeguard its national security, promote economic development and improve its governance capacities.

We will continue to support the work of UNAMA and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto. China has been consistently supported the reconciliation process, characterized by Afghan leadership and ownership, as well as Afghanistan's capacity-building in the security sector to combat

terrorism and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's positive role in this area.

China steadfastly supports Afghan integration in regional development cooperation and will work with the Afghan Government to implement the Chinese-Afghan memorandum of understanding on the One Belt, One Road initiative and to strengthen our cooperation in areas such as business, trade, energy and infrastructure.

China is ready to work with the rest of the international community and continue our tireless endeavour to help Afghanistan achieve peace, stability and development as soon as possible.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): I join other Security Council members in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this discussion on Afghanistan. I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto, Ambassador Van Bohemen and Mr. Yury Fedotov for their briefings. I also welcome and thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Mr. Saikal, for his statement and participation today.

The briefings we heard today mentioned a number of serious challenges to the Afghan Government. The escalation in the number of armed clashes, setting yet another record level since the United Nations began recording incidents in 2007, is worrisome. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) report on the protection of civilians, which recorded 8,397 civilian casualties between January and September this year, underscores the continued gravity of the situation. Given this high figure, we are deeply concerned about the significant escalation in the number of child casualties, which increased by 15 per cent as compared to the same period last year. Similarly, this year also saw the highest number of newly internally displaced persons, totalling more than 500,000 by the end of November, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Children, which make up 50 per cent of the total numbers, are again the most disproportionately affected group. We reiterate the call for all parties to undertake the necessary measures to uphold their obligations to ensure the safety, security and well-being of all civilians in the country, particularly children, who remain the most vulnerable group.

The continued horrific attacks, for which the Taliban has claimed responsibility, remain a major and persistent challenge to the security situation in the country. Furthermore, the Government of Afghanistan continues to engage in fighting with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and its affiliates and is challenged by anti-Government elements. Malaysia strongly condemns the horrific string of attacks that deliberately target civilians. We also strongly condemn the recent attacks on United Nations operations and staff members in Afghanistan and urge the Government to conduct a thorough investigation to ensure that the perpetrators are held accountable.

Despite the persistent political, security and economic challenges, we commend the Afghan Government's continued resilience and commitment under these difficult circumstances. We are encouraged by the recent peace agreement reached between the Government and Hezb-e-Islami, as we believe the agreement represents a crucial milestone in the Government's unwavering commitment to promoting lasting peace and reconciliation in the country. We hope that the successful implementation of the agreement will contribute to confidence-building and encourage further reconciliation between the Government and other groups in the country. Since the agreement was reached among the Afghan people, we are of the view that the Council should be prepared to support their decision, including by positively considering the possible delisting of the Hezb-e-Islami principals from the sanctions list of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), as requested by the Afghan Government.

Promoting greater social and economic development is another critical imperative in achieving long-lasting prosperity, peace and stability in Afghanistan. In that context, we are encouraged by the recent progress on multiple initiatives to foster close cooperation among Afghanistan, regional partners and the international community. We welcome Afghanistan's continued efforts to deepen engagement with regional partners, including through the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, particularly in the areas of addressing security challenges in the region and enhancing infrastructure development.

We are encouraged by the outcome of the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, where the international community pledged $15.2 billion to support Afghanistan's development priorities over the next four years. That is a clear demonstration of the international community's commitment to assisting Afghanistan in

progress towards self-reliance and improving the well-being of its people.

Countering narcotics remains one of the protracted challenges faced by the Afghan Government. Executive Director Fedotov noted in his briefing that the area of opium poppy cultivation increased by 10 per cent in 2016, and potential opium production surged by 43 per cent compared over the year before. More distressingly, eradication efforts decreased by 90 per cent as compared to 2015. All that constitutes a significant reversal of the marginal gains achieved in countering narcotics last year. As narcotics continue to pose serious challenges to the overall security situation and development of Afghanistan, a comprehensive strategy to address all aspects of illicit drugs and its economy must be put in place and fully implemented. In that regard, we are confident that the intensification of efforts and further enhancement of cooperation between the Government and international partners, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, will eventually bring about success in addressing the issue of illicit drugs in a comprehensive manner.

Finally, we wish to think Ambassador Van Bohemen for his briefing on the overall work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) and its Monitoring Team, as well as for his excellent stewardship of the Committee. We welcome and support the initiative of the Chair, which would certainly contribute to enhancing the work and coordination within UNAMA and the 1988 Committee.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Mr. Yamamoto and the entire UNAMA team for their tireless efforts under challenging circumstances. We are convinced that the United Nations, with full respect for the principle of the country's sovereignty, will continue to play a significant and contributing role in realizing Afghanistan's aspirations to achieve national unity and lasting stability. To that end, Malaysia reiterates its firm support for the reconciliation and reintegration efforts undertaken by the Government of Afghanistan within the context of respect for the country's democracy and Constitution, non-violence and respect for the rights of all Afghan people.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I join others in thanking all of our briefers. As Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto said, Afghanistan will not stand alone. I also want to join others in thanking New Zealand for its stewardship of an extremely important committee and for carrying out its very important functions extremely well on behalf of the Council.

The year 2016 has been an important year for Afghanistan: the Warsaw Summit in July and the Brussels Conference in October saw the international community pledge the military and financial support that Afghanistan will need to meet the considerable political and economic challenges of the coming years. We also pledge to support the ambitious reform commitments of the National Unity Government.

Now that the National Unity Government has a clear signal of our support, we look forward to 2017 and to the implementation of the reforms Afghanistan needs for a brighter future. In all of this, the Government and people of Afghanistan will have the United Kingdom's support. I do not think that anyone in this Chamber underestimates just how much there still is to do to ensure that Afghanistan stays on the path to sustained stability. We should focus on three specific points: countering extremists; continuing development efforts; and encouraging regional cooperation.

First, on countering extremists, it is clear that Da'esh is not just a problem to be dealt with in Syria and Iraq. They are a global threat, and Afghanistan has sadly seen that first hand. Less than one month ago, Da'esh claimed the lives of 30 people and left over 70 injured on the streets of Kabul.

The Taliban are compounding the security situation, acting as another armed group in a country that has had more than its fair share. Last week, they stopped a fourth-year student of Kabul Polytechnic University as he was driving home to visit his family. They hanged him in the open, in public, evoking the darkest days of life under Taliban control. And only last weekend, five female security staff were murdered on their way to work in Kandahar. Those are senseless deaths and show that the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, with the NATO Resolute Support Mission, have a tough road ahead.

For our part, the United Kingdom is working closely with the Afghan Government as its seeks to overcome the country's legacy of conflict. As the coalition's leader of the Afghan National Army Officer Academy, we are proudly helping to train the next generation of

military leaders. As we seek to help ensure security on the streets, we also recognize that Afghans must also safe in their own homes. The sad fact is that it is not a reality for many Afghan women. That is why British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson pledged his support for the elimination of violence against women when he spoke with Mr. Abdullah recently.

Secondly, security will always be short-lived if we do not provide a foundation of development for all Afghan people. So we welcome the Government's ambitious Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework. The United Kingdom will be a long-term partner in its delivery. I am proud of our support so far for 7.2 million children, from Kabul to Kandahar, who are going to school thanks to the United Kingdom's support. Over 3 million of them are girls. I call on all members of the Council to follow suit and invest in Afghanistan's future through development.

Thirdly and finally, Afghanistan and its partners must continue to bolster regional relations at both the political and the technical levels. The National Unity Government is charting a course towards stability. If it is to succeed, Afghanistan's neighbours and partners must further empower it, working in lockstep. We welcome the recent Heart of Asia Summit, which reinforced the common interests of Afghanistan and its neighbours. Promoting cooperation across the region through investment in infrastructure, overcoming barriers to trade and pursuing mutually advantageous economic development opportunities is in the entire region's interest.

In conclusion, 2016 has been a year of progress and challenges in Afghanistan. As it draws to a close, we look forward to a more peaceful and prosperous year ahead — a year that sees economic growth and improvements in the delivery of health, education and water, and that sees the lives of ordinary Afghans getting better. All of that will require the sustained political will of the Government and the effective and coordinated support of the rest of us. In that effort, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the Council will play a vital supporting role.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): Allow me to thank today's briefers for their comprehensive updates on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for Spain's contribution as penholder in our discussions on Afghanistan over the past two years. Japan will try to make a meaningful contribution as penholder, starting in January, by seeking a broad range of opinions from our Council colleagues, Afghanistan, the countries of the area, donors and civil society.

We witnessed two crucial international conferences on Afghanistan this year. At the NATO Summit in July, the international community reaffirmed its commitment to standing with the Afghan people on security matters by providing financial support to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) through the end of 2020 and sustaining the Resolute Support Mission beyond 2016. At the Brussels Conference in October, the international community pledged to continue assistance to Afghanistan for the next four years based on the principle of mutual accountability. We sincerely hope that Afghanistan will soon achieve self-reliance to the point where donors no longer need to announce multi-year pledges.

We urge the National Unity Government to make further efforts to implement its commitments regarding the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework.I would like to note, however, that the role of the Security Council is not to oversee progress on the Framework. What we can do is monitor Afghanistan's continued reform efforts and its initiatives to combat the spread of extremism, and evaluate whether they are contributing to international and regional peace and security. The Council should remain united in supporting Afghanistan as it endeavours to overcome its many challenges.

Sadly, the Secretary-General's most recent report on Afghanistan (S/2016/1049) reveals harsh realities. Few improvements have been seen in terms of political developments and security. A positive note can be seen in the frequent meetings between President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, as well as the lessening of public demands to replace the National Unity Government. We have listened carefully to the briefing by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto in order to determine what the Council can do to further support Afghanistan and bring peace and stability to the region.

Today's briefing by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reminds us that comprehensive solutions are required for Afghanistan. Japan has been cooperating with UNODC on counter-narcotics, and we are encouraged by its integrated programme approach to addressing narcotics from a variety of angles. Afghanistan is at its core an

agricultural nation. We are providing support to allow Afghanistan to fight poverty not with poppies, but with the revival of its legitimate agricultural sector. We envision regional cooperation in which Afghanistan's expanded agricultural productivity allows it to export products to neighbouring countries and to become a hub between Central Asia and the Indian Ocean. That approach is in the spirit of the recent Heart of Asia Conference.

Afghanistan possesses the potential for self-reliance, making its dire security situation all the more unfortunate. The unstable environment impedes opportunities for development, while we see dangerous signs of growing extremism. Japan provides $130 million in security assistance each year, but the increased capacity of the ANDSF will depend not only on international support but also on strengthened governance by the National Unity Government, built on a foundation of economic development. Most of all, we firmly believe that an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process is the determining factor in achieving a sustainable resolution to the conflict

The many countries that gathered for the Brussels Conference are eager to witness concrete progress in development. Similarly, the Council is eager to witness concrete progress in security. Both the international community and the National Unity Government must translate their commitments into action in order to achieve those concrete results. If security is strengthened, it will provide a vital foundation for regional cooperation and economic development. Japan will deepen dialogue with various stakeholders and seek progress in the Council going forward.

Mrs. Shwalger (New Zealand): New Zealand too thanks Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto for his dedication to delivering on the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, particularly in such a difficult operating environment.

The year 2016 has seen its share of ups and downs for Afghanistan. As we have heard this morning, the Taliban's offensive has intensified over the past year, with armed clashes at record levels. The cost of weathering this storm has been considerable. The Afghan economy has faced severe challenges in 2016, including a significant drop in investment. A sharp increase in the number of internally displaced persons, resulting from ongoing insecurity, and a large increase in returnees from Pakistan will place additional stress on the already challenging humanitarian situation.

September marked the two-year anniversary of the National Unity Government. Efforts over the past few months to provide a more united leadership have been welcome, but divisions within the Government remain evident, as witnessed by the Parliament's recent dismissal of seven ministers.

The conclusion of a peace agreement with Hezb-i-Islami also represented a positive, if modest, step towards long-term peace and reconciliation. However, prospects for peace talks with the Taliban appear to have dimmed in the near term.

On a more positive note, we welcome the international community's recommitment of support to Afghanistan for another four years at the NATO Warsaw Summit and the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan. New Zealand stood with others to demonstrate its enduring commitment to the people of Afghanistan. We did so without hesitation. The cost of failure would be too great.

History has shown us that no amount of international support can by itself bring peace and security to Afghanistan. As my Minister stressed to the Council in September (see S/PV.7771), the future of Afghanistan lies in the hands of its Government and its people. A unified and effective National Unity Government — one that puts the interests of its people first — will be essential for success.

We recognize the scale and complexity of the challenges the Government faces. Key among them is tackling an emboldened Taliban insurgency. The insecurity brought about by the continued offensive undermines progress across the board. Experience tells us that peace and reconciliation with the Taliban demands a multifaceted approach. The Afghanistan National Defence and Security Forces have a vital role to play in meeting these challenges.

Beyond the battlefield, the Taliban's ability to wage war needs to be constrained. There is an urgent need to tackle the flow of narcotics, funding and personnel to the Taliban and other insurgents. The same can be said of funding from illegal mining.

We also need to see concerted, good-faith efforts by others in the region to halt the supply of funding, weapons and personnel to the Taliban and to support the establishment of a viable peace process. In particular,

the enormous trust deficit between Afghanistan and Pakistan needs to be bridged. These tensions filter down to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), where consensus decision-making regularly allows politically motivated stalling to prevent the most basic and necessary of actions from being taken.

The freezing of assets to prevent them from being used to fund the Taliban's insurgency has been blocked. Even proposals to meet with regional States have been denied. Such behaviour has time and again frustrated practical action that could support peace and reconciliation efforts on the ground. It also undermines the credibility and effectiveness of the 1988 Committee and, by extension, the Council itself. We urge all parties to make a concerted effort to rebuild trust. The alternative will be extremely costly for all involved.

The challenges faced by the National Unity Government in achieving long-term peace and security are many and daunting, but it will not have to walk that road alone, as many have reassured Afghanistan this morning. For its part, New Zealand will remain a partner to Afghanistan in 2017 and beyond.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before I give the floor to the next speaker, I would like to inform the Council that, based on news coming in to us, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Turkey, Mr. Andrey Karlov, has been shot. He is seriously wounded and is being transferred to a hospital in Ankara. We have no further details at this point.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for informing us of that terrible incident.

I would like to begin by warmly thanking our briefers, Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, Mr. Yury Fedotov and Ambassador Van Bohemen and Ambassador Saikal.

France associates itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Two years since the establishment of the Government of National Unity, it is important to underscore that progress has been made. The Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework was adopted; a road map that defines priority public policies for the years to come was developed; and our dialogue aimed at halting migration towards Europe resulted in the signing of an agreement. Those efforts must be welcomed, as they were recently at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan. France reiterates its full support for the Afghan Government and encourages it to continue its efforts to develop and stabilize the country.

The Afghan forces have also made considerable progress. In that regard, I commend their commitment and courage. However, the continuing deterioration of the security situation is extremely worrying. In addition to the almost daily confrontations, new attacks by the Taliban and the Khorasan Islamic State — which is to say, Da'esh — have served to confirm the fragility of the situation since our previous debate in September (see S/PV.7771). The recent deterioration in the humanitarian situation, with the massive inflow of refugees from Pakistan and Iran, also puts the Afghan Government in a difficult position. In that context, the first priority for Afghanistan is to have a strong and united Government. That national unity is the prerequisite for dealing effectively with security, economic and development issues.

As Mr. Yamamoto said moments ago, the conflict not only prevents Afghanistan from achieving its economic potential, but it also bears an extremely high a human cost, especially for children. That is why it is urgent to relaunch discussions on a peace process led by and for the Afghan people. France calls on all actors, in particular the regional Powers, to use their influence in order to make sure that the end of hostilities and the resumption of peace negotiations become a reality. We have a collective responsibility to actively support the stabilization of Afghanistan and to contribute to the establishment of lasting peace in the country, with all the Afghan actors who have demonstrated their serious commitment.

I would like to take advantage of the presence here of the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to consider for a moment the issue of combating drug trafficking. This is a subject, as members are aware, which is of great concern to France. As Mr. Fedotov said earlier, drug trafficking fuels the illicit economy, corruption and the Taliban insurgency, while also jeopardizing the health of many Afghanis. The report prepared jointly by UNODC and the Government of Afghanistan in October illustrates the notable and worrying developments, which were mentioned by Mr. Fedotov. As others mentioned before me, France is concerned by the 43 per cent increase in opium production and by the significant reduction in the eradication of the areas where the opium poppy is grown. There are enormous challenges in those areas, whether related to the security situation or to

mobilizing the significant resources that those efforts require. France therefore commends the technical assistance provided by UNODC and encourages the Afghan authorities to step up their efforts aimed at reducing the production and trafficking of drugs.

United Nations support, through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), remains more essential than ever to accompany Afghanistan in the search for greater peace and stability. Let me conclude by reiterating my country's full support to the Afghan Government and to the work of the United Nations in support of its efforts. I would also like to pay tribute to all of the UNAMA personnel for the work they are undertaking in very difficult conditions.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Yamamoto for his briefing and for his work, and Mr. Fedotov for his briefing. Our thanks also go to Ambassador Van Bohemen of New Zealand for his work at the helm of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).

As this is our last participation in the Council dealing with the issue of Afghanistan, we would like to express our support for the Government of Afghanistan in its quest for unity, peace and prosperity in the country given the difficult ongoing political and security situation. The revival of peace talks with the Taliban insurgents were affected because of the violent actions against the Government and against civilians. Furthermore, we welcome the 29 September peace agreement between the Government of Afghanistan and Hizb-i Islami, which has now joined the national reconciliation process. We hope that important step will encourage other political forces to join efforts towards reconciliation and unity.

In that regard, the 1988 Sanctions Committee, on the Taliban and associated entities, should look into possible delisting of Hizb-i Islami, since its main leader has fully rejected any terrorist links and decided to collaborate with the Government, so as to move forward in building peace in the context of the agreements reached between the Afghan Government and that group. We hope that consensus can emerge among members of the Committee to proceed in that direction.

Furthermore, in the context of the international community's efforts to back peace and reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan, we welcome the outcome of the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan and its reaffirmation to assist that country in terms of development and financial assistance.

The security situation in Afghanistan continues to be volatile because of armed clashes between the Taliban and other violent non-State actors against the Afghan security forces. That has had an adverse impact on the civilian population, who flee for their lives from regions of armed conflict. We are concerned about the 22 per cent increase in armed clashes as compared to last year. That is the highest rate of recent years. We are also concerned about the civilian casualties caused by aerial bombardment by the international coalition. The security situation in the country has worsened because of the offensive carried out by the Taligan since September, which is a big challenge to the Afghan armed forces.

Therefore, the spiral in violence has made civilians the main victims of those armed clashes. That is borne out by statistics of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which state that 8,000 persons were affected, a figure that includes dead and wounded, as well as Afghan girls and boys, who have suffered traumas as a result of being military targets. There are some 700 dead, which represents a 15 per cent increase as compared to last year, not to mention the more serious fact that many of those children continue to be recruited as soldiers by non-State actors, in flagrant violation of international treaties, including those concerning the promotion and protection of the fundamental rights of children. Despite that terrible reality, we pay tribute to the work carried out by the Afghan Government aimed at increasing the number of child-protection units.

In the context of regional cooperation, we encourage Afghan authorities to continue their talks with the Government of Pakistan to enhance trust for the benefit of both peoples and to create a common front to contribute to stability in the region. Likewise, we welcome the strengthening of bilateral relations among Afghanistan, India, Iran and China, among other countries. That process is key in supporting Afghanistan in solving its complex political, security, humanitarian and economic challenges. We harbour hope that Afghanistan very soon will become a full-fledged member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a step that will favour efforts in effectively fighting terrorism and other security threats to the countries of the region.

In terms of empowering women in accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), we would like to welcome highlight the work of Afghan authorities to reinforce the legal framework against the harassment of women in the workplace and the ongoing progress in women's participation in the establishment of peace and security. Despite all of those advances in promoting women's rights, we still see violent acts against this vulnerable group, such as the one at Kandahar airport on 17 December when armed men killed five women employed in the terminal after they had previously received death threats because they wanted to exercise their right to work. That is an event that we roundly condemn and that we believe should be punished.

Drug smuggling continues to be a serious threat to peace and stability in Afghanistan. The Taliban insurgency is using illegal drug trafficking to finance its terrorist activities. As we see in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/1049), there has been an increase in poppy production and there is a low rate of crop eradication. That is very worrisome because of the intense fighting, especially in Helmand province. In that regard, we would like to acknowledge the joint efforts by Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, with the aim of forming a common front against that challenge within a regional cooperation framework. We reiterate that an effective fight against drugs requires international cooperation, including from neighbouring countries and destination countries, as part of a joint responsibility to prevent, combat and eradicate that scourge.

As our term on the Security Council will come to an end in just a few days, we would like to acknowledge the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in building peace and stability in the country. Without a doubt, the Mission plays a crucial role in supporting initiatives by the Afghan authorities to face the challenges confronting the country and to shore up the State and its political institutions.

In conclusion, we would encourage the Government of Afghanistan to step up its efforts, along with the constructive support of the international community, to bring about a broad and inclusive political process that will lead to enduring peace and to ensure that the State has more control over all its territory and exercises greater sovereignty over its resources for the benefit of its people.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I join my colleagues in thanking the briefers for the useful information we heard under this agenda item at the beginning of the meeting, the scope and diversity of which were surprising.

Many aspects have been highlighted here with regard to the current situation in Afghanistan. Egypt commends the Afghan Government for the major efforts they made to put together a National Framework for Peace and Development in Afghanistan. The international community has welcomed the plan, which was an important element in the success of the ministerial-level Brussels Conference on Afghanistan taht took place at the beginning of October. We also welcome the commitment displayed by the international community in order to continue politically and financially supporting Afghanistan. And we also welcome the statements made at that Conference with regard to the intention to provide $15.2 billion between now and 2020.

We urge the international community to honour its commitments to support the ambitious reform plan put together by the Government of National Unity. In the same vein, we congratulate the people and the Government of Afghanistan on the positive development represented by the peace agreement signed at the end of September between the Government and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin). We hope that this will be an example followed by other Afghan factions and that it will lead to peace throughout Afghanistan.

Terrorism remains the greatest challenge facing Afghanistan. The Government's efforts aimed at countering terrorism along with the international support it has garnered for that purpose is the most suitable way to put an end to this phenomenon, as is the case in many regions of the world — be it in Central Asia or other regions of the world. The ongoing activities and spread of Da'esh/Khorasan Province in Afghanistan is a major danger, and we must be relentless in our efforts to combat it by pooling the efforts of the international community.

On the other hand, drug trafficking in Afghanistan is a parallel threat to that of terrorism. The growth of this problem, as was highlighted in the report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime published in October represents a step back in combating drug trafficking. The figures in the report show that drug trafficking fuels illegal activities, central among them

terrorist groups and armed militias. It is therefore essential to encourage international and regional cooperation in order to fight drug trafficking. In that regard, we appreciate the convening of the Central Asian conference on drug trafficking in Afghanistan, which was recently organized by Tajikistan.

The worsening of the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan in recent months is an additional challenge for Afghanistan, and the international community must shoulder its responsibilities and provide adequate support to the Afghan Government in order to help it meet that challenge. The report (S/2016/1049) of the Secretary-General illustrates how serious the situation is.

Egypt maintains strong, friendly relations with the people and the Government of Afghanistan. We are always ready to support stabilization efforts throughout the Afghan territory and we are always ready to support the efforts of the Afghan Government in combating terrorism.

In addition to its efforts to promote development and improve the living conditions of Afghans, the Egyptian Agency for Partnership and Development marshalls coordination among various Egyptian agencies to respond to the needs of Afghanistan. Our strategic training programmes for Afghan armed forces and police are an example of how successful that cooperation can be, and they fill an important need in Afghanistan thanks to Egyptian expertise in those areas. That has enabled us to train 2,567 Afghan police officers. Egypt also provided LE1 million Egyptian in humanitarian assistance, in addition to training for nurses, diplomats and legal experts, as well as assistance for more than 500 Afghani students at Al-Azhar University. Moreover, we have deployed efforts in Kabul to raise awareness among the public with regard to tolerance with regard to Islam. We promote assistance and cooperation in other areas as well, especially in the field of energy, in particular renewable energy.

Lastly, Egypt reiterates its support and solidarity with the Government of Afghanistan in its attempts to achieve peace and stability. The goal is the same as the goal of combating terrorism. In that regard, we would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to the Ambassador of New Zealand, who chairs the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto and Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Fedotov for their interesting briefings. I would also like to thank Ambassador of New Zealand, Mr. Gerard van Bohemen, and his entire team for their outstanding efforts at the healm of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).

While the Council's attention is focused on the very serious situations in other parts of the world, the report (S/2016/1049) of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan nevertheless serves to remind us of the huge political, security and humanitarian challenges that that country continues to face, in spite of the progress achieved, in particular by the Afghan Government. As part of that progress, I want to commend the efforts of Afghan officials in promoting political dialogue, national unity, peace and stability in the country. That progress has lead to a relative easing of tensions on the political front, as witnessed by the signing of a peace agreement on 29 September between the Government and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin). Such momentum towards dialogue should be encouraged, as it could bring us closer to our main goal of reducing the number of armed groups that pose an ongoing threat to Afghanistan.

On the security front, however, much remains to be done. Armed gangs and terrorist groups continue to threaten the population and carry out attacks. With regard to the Taliban, no tangible results have been achieved so far, unfortunately. In fact, they have continued, and even stepped up their offensive, with various attacks in different parts of the country. At the same time, we should note that the pace of asymmetric attacks, including killings and abductions, have increased, along with its trail of tragedy. My delegation therefore urges that every effort be made to convince the Taliban of the need to engage in unconditional dialogue with the Afghan Government.

Also with regard to security, we should welcome the growing strength of the Afghan security forces. We should also commend the involvement of international forces in support of the Afghan army in fighting the Islamic State.

The security situation I have described and ongoing challenges in combating drug trafficking,continue to have devastating consequences on civilians and on respect for human rights. Evidence of this, according to

the report, is the heavy price paid by civilian victims, mainly women and children, especially during the air strikes carried out against the Taliban in the city of Kunduz.

In the area of human rights, while we welcome the Government's legislation to protect women against harassment, we would like to echo the concerns of the Ministry of Women's Affairs with regard the persistent obstacles that women encounter in participating and advancing in State institutions. We call on the United Nations to continue to take into account the voice of women, who, as emphasized in the report, play a crucial role in fostering a peaceful society and challenging radical ideologies, as well as in preventing violent extremism.

My delegation would also like to commend the working group established by the Civilian Casualty Avoidance and Mitigation Boards and would like the rules of engagement to take into greater account the safeguarding of the lives and physical integrity of innocent civilians. I would also like to align myself with the Secretary-General in solemnly calling for protecting the increasing number of displaced persons. Their quality of life undoubtedly depends on their finding a permanent home, the allocation of land and the provision of substantial support.

As we have seen, the Afghan Government continues to embark upon a path of constructive political and economic development and good governance in spite of the difficulties that the country faces on the road to peace and development. At this point, I would like to make a solemn appeal to the countries of the region, to the international community as a whole and to private investors to intensify their efforts and increase their support to the Government and the people of Afghanistan in their quest for economic and social development. In that respect, we need to acknowledge that the commitments made at the NATO Summit and at the Brussels Conference offer opportunities for initiating crucial reforms, particularly in poverty reduction, governance, establishing the rule of law and the carrying out of elections.

The surge of international solidarity generated at the Brussels Conference, which led to pledges by different partners in the amount of approximately $15.2 billion to contribute to the development priorities of the country until 2020, should be praised. Those commendable pledges must be followed by the disbursement of the funds so that Afghanistan can once and for all turn the page on this dark chapter in its long and glorious history.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Senegal's support to Mr. Yamamoto and the entire Mission and commend the Government of Afghanistan for its efforts to promote peace, stability and development in the country.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We are grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Yamamoto, and to the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mr. Fedotov, for their briefings. We are also grateful to Ambassador Gerard van Bohemen of New Zealand, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), and we praise his outstanding work in steering the Committee over the past two years.

The security and development assistance commitments for the next four years made by the international community to Afghanistan and its Government during the July 2016 NATO Summit, the October 2015 Brussels Conference, in which pledges were made to assist the country in overcoming the enormous challenges it faces, and the recent Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia/Istanbul Process, which took a strong stand against terrorism, were instances where political will and a tangible commitment to the country were translated into initiatives by the international community in support of Afghanistan that are expected to advance the vitally needed stabilization and reform efforts embodied in the Afghan National Peace and Development Framework.

However, persistent political tensions, increasing numbers of security incidents, rising numbers of internally displaced persons and returning refugees, a harsh economic environment and a stalled peace process are some key elements portrayed by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2016/1049). The UNODC's *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2016* reveals a substantial expansion in areas of opium poppy cultivation and exponentially increasing opium production and a decrease in eradication efforts due to financing restrictions and the security situation.

Even given the great dependence of the country on the drugs economy and the latter's role in fuelling corruption and in the financing of insurgents and terrorists, with a view to translating into action the international community consensus, assistance should

be stepped up in the eradication efforts and in finding alternatives to poppy cultivation and opium production, by diversifying the country's economy. We welcome the establishment of the national drug action plan, which serves to underscore the Afghan Government's willingness and determination to counter illicit production and trafficking and to reduce demand.

On a different note, despite the immense difficulties, the measures taken by the Government to promote women's rights and their economic empowerment are very encouraging. The holding of Global Open Day events throughout the country, in which Afghan women underlined their role in fostering a peaceful society, including in preventing violent extremism, and the need to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and legal frameworks protecting the rights of women, especially from violence, are is an example of such measures.

Regretfully, little progress has been made on the road to peace. We took good note of the peace agreement between the Government and the Hizb-i Islami, in the expectation that the agreement would be fully implemented with a view to reducing violence and promoting reconciliation, while the Taliban movement continues to engage in a spree of violence and no progress has taken place in the search for a peace settlement. In that regard, we join special the Special Representative in calling the Taliban to embrace dialogue and a political process without conditions, which could lead to the achievement of peace in the country.

The strengthening of regional cooperation is key to the attainment of progress in the search for peace. We regret that relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan remain strained, and it is our hope that dialogue will proceed positively and bear results, due to the importance of relations between the two countries for peace and development in the region. We commend the renewed commitment of the trilateral cooperation between Afghanistan, Iran and India, the deepening of engagement of Gulf States in the pursuit of peace, and infrastructure and security development with Central Asian States.

In conclusion, we would like to express our support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which is operating in such a challenging environment, and to thank it for its contribution to peace and stability in Afghanistan. We would also like to reiterate our solidarity with the Government and the people of Afghanistan as they face immense challenges. We fully share the view that the country's main priority should be to reinvigorate the peace and reconciliation processes and that the international community must maintain its commitment to the economic and social development and the establishment of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): In the light of your announcement, Mr. President, I would first like to express my solidarity with the delegation of the Russian Federation in the face of the attack suffered by the Russian Ambassador in Ankara, victim of the unreasonable and the intolerant.

I am grateful to the briefers for their valuable, enlightening and complementary briefings, which described the difficult reality that Afghanistan is experiencing today. Once again, through the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, we wish to reiterate our gratitude to all United Nations staff, while underscoring the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in the fulfilment of its mandate and of those involved in the delivery of humanitarian aid throughout the country, who, despite working in extremely arduous conditions and being victims of frequent attacks, continue to bring a measure of relief to the people who need it so much.

We also welcome and commend the work that has been done over the past two years by New Zealand as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011). We wish every success to Japan, which will take up the position in January.

Uruguay reiterates its call upon the Afghan Government and urges its authorities to continue on the path towards lasting peace. In that respect, I welcome the activities undertaken by the Government to achieve the peace so long desired by the Afghan people. The peace agreement signed recently by the Government and the High Peace Council with Hezb-i-Islami, on 22 September, represents an important step forward and reflects the efforts of the Government to initiate a dialogue. We hope that this step will serve as an example and as a way to achieve dialogue and direct talks between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban, so as to create conditions conducive to the establishment of peace.

Afghanistan continues to face a number of challenges in seeking political stability and meeting the needs of its people. Nonetheless, Uruguay welcomes the

Government's efforts to overcome obstacles, and in that respect we encourage it to continue to work towards reconciliation, showing the leadership necessary to reach an agreement that will ensure stability in the short, medium and long term and enable Afghanistan to continue with the reforms necessary to rebuild the country in an environment of peace, security and development.

At the recent Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, commitments were made by the Government, through the reform agenda, and by the international community, through the provision of political and financial support, to address the country's development priorities through 2020. It remains key for the United Nations and the international community to provide support and assistance to the National Unity Government, in strict compliance with the principles of national ownership and leadership. The support of the countries of the region in achieving economic growth and in overcoming issues related to peace and security in Afghanistan is vital.

We are deeply concerned at the worsening humanitarian situation. Recent reports have indicated that 5 million people require assistance, some 13 per cent more than last year. The rapid rise in the number of new internally displaced persons as a result of intensified fighting; the increase in the number of refugees and undocumented Afghans from Pakistan — more than 600,000; the limited resources in a number of sectors, in particular the health sector; restricted access to aid; and insufficient supplies to meet existing needs means that humanitarian aid is urgently needed. We hope that these obstacles can be overcome quickly.

Quick and unfettered access of humanitarian aid to conflict areas is absolutely key. Uruguay reiterates that restricting the delivery of humanitarian assistance constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law. In this context, the protection of civilians, especially women and children, is critical, and Uruguay therefore deems it imperative to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In that context, we call for the full implementation of the provisions of resolution 2286 (2016), on the protection of the wounded and the sick and medical facilities and personnel, adopted last May.

We wish also to refer here to the key role of Afghan women. Last September, at our previous debate on the issue, the Special Representative, quoting President Ghani, said, "the face of Afghan poverty is female" (*S/PV.7771, p.3*).

We stress the need to redouble the efforts made to ensure the economic empowerment of women. Likewise, the role of women in the peace process and in Afghan society is vital. We therefore urge the Government of Afghanistan to continue with its ongoing efforts to empower women and strengthen their role and active participation in the peace process. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/1049), those commitments need to be translated into action, including continued concrete work and national financing to implement the national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and relevant legal and policy frameworks protecting the rights of women and especially protecting women from violence.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Spain.

Spain shares the views expressed by previous speakers and aligns itself with the statement to be made later by the observer of the European Union.

We welcome the support for the people of Afghanistan and for the National Unity Government and its efforts to promote stability, democracy, security, human rights and the country's economic and social progress. We commend the support provided to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the outstanding work that the United Nations is carrying out in Afghanistan. We share in the satisfaction at the considerable progress achieved in Afghanistan in the past decade, while recognizing that it remains fragile. We also share the determination to continue to work together to consolidate it. We join the call on the Afghan authorities to continue to support the reform process, including electoral reform, good governance, combating corruption, the promotion and protection of human rights, in particular the rights of women and children.

We share the concern at the security situation in the country and at the growing number of civilian victims of the conflict, and, of course, the common and deep outrage of all at the persistence of terrorism and violent extremism.

The international community is united here, as it is in very few cases, in its support for Afghanistan, as was evident once again at the Brussels Conference, convened

jointly by the European Union and Afghanistan, and at the Warsaw NATO summit, both held this past year.

I should like here to highlight three issues.

First, I would refer to the briefing given this morning by Ambassador Van Bohemen, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities. Spain supports all efforts aimed at ensuring an Afghan-led and owned peace process as the only way to put a definitive end to the conflict. We trust that the agreement reached by the Afghan Government with the Hezb-i-Islami will achieve the desired results and that new agreements for peace will follow.

Secondly, I would underscore the work done on Afghanistan by the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, co-chaired by Spain and the United Kingdom. I welcome the commitment of the Special Representative and his UNAMA team in this respect, and I reiterate our gratitude for the work begun by the Government of Afghanistan to implement the national plan of action on resolution 1325 (2000) and the national strategy to eliminate violence against women. We encourage the Government to continue to translate into reality, in a decisive, tangible and irreversible manner, the commitment it has undertaken in terms of ensuring the rights of women and their increased participation in public life, including in the peace process and the reconciliation process.

Thirdly, with respect to the humanitarian situation, the Secretary-General and the Special Representative have shown us the growing relevance of this issue in the immediate future. The situation is very disturbing, not only because of the increase in the number of internally displaced persons, but also because the situation has worsened given the new dynamics of the conflict and given the number of Afghans who are returning, many of whom are undocumented and in a situation of extreme vulnerability. We appeal to the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations, humanitarian agencies and the countries of the region to give priority attention to the situation in the coming months.

I would conclude by pointing out that today's debate is the last one in which Spain will participate as an elected member of the Security Council for the 2015-2016 biennium. My country has had the honour of carrying out the important responsibilities of penholder in the Council with regard to Afghanistan. That role has been fulfilling in two ways. As a friendly country to Afghanistan, we have been able to keep our commitment in a unique way by coordinating the work of the Council in the promotion of peace and security within Afghanistan. As an active and committed member of the Security Council, we have tried to contribute to maintaining the unity of the Council in its support for Afghanistan. I thank the representative of Afghanistan for the kind words he shared about my country. I want to assure him that, under different circumstances after 1 January, Afghanistan will continue to have a friend, a partner and an ally in Spain.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. To that end, let me take this opportunity to remind speakers that the presidency will use the flashing lights on the collars of the microphones to prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing or to post them on the PaperSmart web page.

I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): Allow me to express our deepest condolences to the Russian Federation delegation for the outrageous attack that killed the Russian Ambassador in Ankara.

Italy aligns itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union. Italy also supports the statement to be made by the representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands as part of our cooperation in the framework of our upcoming split term in the Security Council.

I would like to express my appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto for his comprehensive briefing, and for the opportunity of addressing the Council regarding the situation in Afghanistan. We appreciate the briefing of the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Fedotov, and express our tremendous satisfaction over the work done by the delegation of New Zealand as Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the

Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities.

The successful outcomes of the Warsaw Summit and the Brussels Conference are a testament to the enduring partnership between the international community and Afghanistan. Together, we will persist in our joint efforts to create an environment that allows the Afghan people to envision a future of peace, economic prosperity and self-reliance.

Our partnership is essential precisely because Afghanistan continues to face daunting challenges, first and foremost in the security arena. Since the previous debate (see S/PV.7771), Afghan forces have continued to confront a determined assault from a wide range of violent extremist groups, which they have faced with great courage and valour. Italy continues its support in that area as a framework nation in the Resolute Support Mission, which provides crucial training, advising and assistance so that the Afghan security forces can continue to make important progress in their ability to counter those threats.

But the situation remains fragile, and we note with concern that the violence continues to take its heaviest toll on the innocent and most vulnerable. Civilian casualties are still at record levels, and I also wish to call the Council's attention to reports that, according to several sources, the conflict has forced the closure of up to 1,000 schools.

The plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the general deterioration of humanitarian conditions require our sustained attention. The dramatically increased flow of returnees from neighbouring countries this year is especially challenging, and Italy is proud to support the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees with a voluntary contribution of €1 million in order to meet the humanitarian needs of IDPs and returnees.

Afghanistan must now complement that support from the international community with an unwavering commitment to carry out the reform agenda, in line with the expectations of the donor community, the Afghan population and the principle of mutual accountability, reaffirmed at Brussels.

That effort will require a sustained unity of purpose within the Government. The recent nomination of the Commissioners of the electoral management bodies is a positive step in that regard, which we hope will be followed by further action, such as an agreed electoral timeline.

The fight against corruption must also be a top priority, and the recent inauguration of the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre must be quickly followed up with an effective investigation and prosecution of cases, in close cooperation with all the relevant institutions.

The renewed commitment at Brussels to the rights of women and their empowerment in society is also crucial. While the improvements made in the past 15 years are important, more must be done. Consider, for instance, the fact that international lawliteracy rates for women are still unacceptably high, especially in rural areas.

We also take this opportunity to acknowledge the important work by the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security. Together with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, they continue to assist the Afghan Government in its commitment to implementing resolution 1325 (2000). We endorse their recent conclusions and we welcome the progress made by Afghanistan thus far, while also encouraging more focused efforts where gaps still remain, such as women's effective participation in the security sector. The only way for Afghanistan to fully achieve peace and prosperity is if women become primary stakeholders in the process.

The same concept applies equally to peace and reconciliation, where women must play a prominent role. Italy supports all efforts in that regard, and we encourage the participation of all actors who can engage positively in this area.

The involvement of regional partners is a key factor, and we continue to encourage all initiatives aimed at establishing a framework of dialogue and collaboration between Afghanistan and its neighbours.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Thoms (Germany): Germany aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

In his report (S/2016/1049), the Secretary General highlights some encouraging developments. Germany welcomes the peace agreement with Hezb-i Islami

(Gulbuddin), which gives us new hope that lasting peace is possible in Afghanistan. I would like to commend the Government of National Unity for keeping its doors open for peace negotiations with the Taliban. A comprehensive peace and reconciliation process remains the only way to long-term stability in Afghanistan and the region. We call on all Afghan parties to seize the moment and to join the peace talks.

Furthermore, we are encouraged by the transparent recruitment process for the Independent Elections Commission. That was an important step towards the holding of early parliamentary and district council elections. It will now be critically important that the Government act with resolve and unity of purpose in implementing the necessary electoral reforms.

We also took note, with appreciation, that the Anti-Corruption Criminal Justice Centre took up its work, received its first cases and held its first trials. Visible progress in fighting corruption is key to economic development, and we strongly encourage the Afghan Government to maintain its efforts to fight corruption and foster the rule of law. The culture of impunity must be eradicated. To that effect, we have called for a fair and transparent official investigation with regard to the allegations of recent gross human rights violations and abuses by the Vice-President.

The security situation continues to be the main challenge in Afghanistan. As the Secretary General points out in his report, the number of armed clashes rose by 22 per cent. The number of civilian casualties continues to be very high, and the number of child casualties has increased by another 15 per cent. Germany recently assumed the chairmanship of the local group of friends on children in armed conflict. We will continue to raise awareness about the suffering of that most vulnerable group of victims.

The difficult security situation is also one of the reasons that the eradication efforts on opium poppy cultivation have decreased by 90 per cent as compared to last year. The production and trade in illegal narcotics negatively affects the entire region, as well as Europe, but it also increasingly has an impact on the health of Afghan society. We strongly encourage the Government to step up its efforts to fight opium poppy cultivation and opium production more decisively.

The volatile security situation in large parts of the country hampers economic growth and constitutes an additional challenge to accommodating returning refugees. As has been reported, over 500,000 Afghans have been displaced internally, and over 600,000 Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan from neighbouring countries during the course of the year. I would like to commend the long-time host countries, such as Pakistan and Iran, for the assistance they have provided Afghan refugees. I also thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration for their support to the returning refugees. At the same time, we call upon all parties to ensure that the return of refugees is conducted in a dignified manner and takes into account the absorption capacity of Afghanistan. A stable security situation, economic growth and job creation will be essential to avoiding a possible humanitarian crisis. Germany remains committed to supporting the Afghan Government's efforts towards a sustainable reintegration of the returning refugees and encourages all Member States to join that endeavour.

Afghanistan represents Germany's single-largest engagement in a foreign country in both civilian and military terms. At the Brussels Conference, we pledged to support the Afghan Government with substantial financial resources. Germany remains committed to supporting Afghanistan in close cooperation with the Government and our international partners.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Munir (Pakistan): I would like to begin by offering our heartfelt condolences to the Russian delegation in connection with the shooting of the Ambassador in Ankara.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2016/1049) and Special Representative Yamamoto for his briefing. We appreciate the resolve of the Afghan leaders to work together to address their differences in a spirit of cooperation. We agree with the Secretary-General that a united Afghan Government is imperative if the country is to effectively address its multiple challenges.

Afghanistan's continuing political volatility, coupled with the uncertain security and economic situation, remains a cause of concern for the international community. In Brussels, we collectively renewed our commitment to supporting Afghanistan in its efforts to achieve security and economic development over the next decade and a half. Pakistan will continue to support regional and international

efforts in that regard. The $500 million commitment we made in Brussels was an expression of our firm resolve never to abandon Afghanistan. Our participation in the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference in Amritsar, despite the problems of escalation on the line of control and the working boundary, testified to our unflinching commitment to lasting peace in Afghanistan and the region. While external support is critical, it is no substitute for internal political stability. The Afghan Government's successful implementation of reforms and active promotion of peace and reconciliation depend upon it.

The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces have bravely tried to stand their ground, but the security situation continues to deteriorate. The presence of large numbers of terrorist, violent and extremist groups and organizations in the ungoverned areas of the country are a continued challenge to the long-term stability of Afghanistan and its neighbours. The security situation in Afghanistan is complex. The drivers of the recent surge in violence lie within Afghanistan, not outside it. We need to objectively evaluate the efforts to address the deteriorating security situation. I reiterate Pakistan's firm commitment to fighting terrorism and eliminating every kind of terrorist network. We reject the unsubstantiated assertion that the Taliban reorganized in Pakistan during the winter. Terrorist sanctuaries have in fact shifted to Afghanistan, owing to our successful counter-terrorism operation Zarb-e-Azb, the results of which have been widely acknowledged by the international community. Nevertheless, as Pakistan has always stressed, robust border management is critical to countering cross-border movement. We do not understand the logic behind resistance to operationalizing that much-needed mechanism. It is somewhat disingenuous to propose a regional mechanism when Kabul is unwilling even to work bilaterally with us on the issue.

The peace and reconciliation process has yet to produce results, and we understand Afghan frustration about that. But it is not due to lack of effort on our part. We have continued to persist sincerely and wholeheartedly, but we can only facilitate. The Afghan parties have to conclude that military means cannot bring peace and that reconciliation is the only way to achieve lasting stability. All our efforts must be directed towards achieving a politically negotiated settlement through an Afghan-led and -owned peace process. We believe that all the members of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group must redouble their efforts to reach that goal. Efforts that undermine peace and reconciliation must be avoided. Implementing the agreed-on approaches faithfully, and maintaining trust among the partners, continue to be fundamental to furthering peace and reconciliation. The Afghan Government has signed a peace agreement with the Hizb-i Islami, and its implementation could serve as a model for talks with other groups.

Despite the negative rhetoric, Pakistan has remained committed to facilitating the transit of goods to landlocked Afghanistan through its territory. We believe that the two sides must work together in order to extend and improve the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement. In that context, I would like to re-emphasize that the peaceful resolution of outstanding disputes will further enhance the prospects for regional cooperation and connectivity.

For almost four decades, we have hosted millions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. We remain committed to helping them return to their homeland with honour and dignity. We are fully engaged in that regard with Afghanistan and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We are working on plans to extend their stay in Pakistan until 31 December 2017, and to ensure that their voluntary return is smooth and orderly. International support and the creation of pull factors in Afghanistan continue to be critical.

The people of Pakistan and the people of Afghanistan enjoy age-old bonds not only of kinship, faith and shared history but also of a shared destiny. We rejoice in their accomplishments and are saddened by their suffering. We are ready to support them in every way, and we are with our Afghan brothers and sisters in their struggle for a better future that can bring prosperity, health, education and, above all, peace and stability to the whole region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): On behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I would like to thank the Security Council for the opportunity to speak in today's debate. I would like to begin by offering my deepest condolences to our Russian colleague on the occasion of the killing of the Russian Ambassador in Turkey. He has our deepest sympathy.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would also like to underline the statement just made by the representative of Italy as part of our cooperation related to our upcoming split term in the Security Council.

We commend the Secretary-General for his detailed and thorough report (S/2016/1049). I would also like to thank Special Representative Yamamoto and my good friend Mr. Saikal, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for their interesting briefings.

I will focus today on three issues — the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, political developments and the security and human-rights situations.

The Brussels Conference was a key event of the past couple of months. Ms. Lilianne Ploumen, our Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, reaffirmed the commitment of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Afghanistan. I think the Conference made it clear that the international community, and the Netherlands, as part of it, will not abandon Afghanistan.

We welcome the presentation of the 2017-2018 Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework by President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah. We feel strongly that the Framework sets clear progress indicators for the Afghan Government. Those declarations, of course, now have to be translated into concrete action. We urge the Unity Government to become more of a genuine Government of unity. Only a united team can bring about progress. In that context, we welcome the fact that seven members of the Electoral Commission and five of the Independent Electoral Complaint Commission have been announced. They should pursue electoral reforms and prepare for elections, as was agreed. We also welcome the fact that the nomination process was transparent. We also welcome the agreement reached with Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) and call for its implementation. We hope it will be an inspiration for other, similar agreements.

One of the priorities of the Afghan Government that we support is the advancement of the anti-corruption agenda. The inauguration of the new Anti-Corruption Justice Centre in October was a welcome step in that regard. At the same time, however, we must realize that corruption remains a big problem. We believe it is important to ensure that the national anti-corruption strategy can meet the commitments made in the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework.

Secondly, with regard to the security situation and regional cooperation, armed clashes between the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and the Taliban have intensified. Along with an increasing number of returning refugees, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is worrying. In order to achieve a truly stable Afghanistan, we believe it is vital to intensify the Afghan-led peace process. President Ghani has stated that the Government is open to peace talks, and we strongly encourage the Taliban to act accordingly. The Netherlands stands ready to support an Afghan-led peace process in whatever form is agreed on. The countries of the region have a critical and positive role to play in supporting Afghanistan. A regional approach is crucial to achieving structural security and stability, but regional stability is possible only when all partners are genuinely engaged and work together, which we strongly encourage.

With respect to human rights, an EU-Afghanistan human rights dialogue took place in Kabul three weeks ago. There we discussed women's rights, children's rights, torture and ill-treatment, access to justice and the importance of freedom of expression. We are looking forward to achieving concrete deliverables on these topics, together, in the coming months, as we have said. We commend the role of the United Nations, which has continued its efforts to advance Afghan women's equal and full participation in building peace and security. We also commend the fact that at the Brussels Conference, both the President and the Chief Executive stated that gender equality was a top priority for their Government. Moreover, the First Lady, Rhula Ghani, has of course repeatedly underlined the importance of the economic participation of women. We welcome this full-heartedly. Women are the key to a better future and we must empower them.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of the Netherlands has been a long-time partner of Afghanistan and contributed significantly in the fields of peace, justice and development. Dutch military personnel have given their lives in bringing peace to Afghanistan. We must remember them. The Kingdom of the Netherlands remains committed to supporting Afghanistan throughout the transformation decade — a decade of ever greater Afghan ownership and leadership. The Afghan people can count on us standing by their side, in the full knowledge that the road ahead will be long. The Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue

to be a partner with Afghanistan for peace, justice and development.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Thöresson (Sweden): Allow me, too, to express our deepest condolences to our Russian friends and colleagues for the heinous crime committed in Ankara today.

Sweden aligns itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

In my national capacity, I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2016/1049), which as usual provides a sound and comprehensive basis for our discussions today. Let me also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto, Executive Director Fedotov, Ambassador Van Bohemen and Ambassador Saikal for their insightful briefings.

Democratic and peaceful development in Afghanistan remains a priority for Sweden. We believe that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), through its work in support of the Afghan people, continues to play a critical role in the process of stabilization and in preventing a return to conflict in Afghanistan. We are particularly pleased to see the significant attention given to women, peace and security in the most recent report.

Peaceful and inclusive societies, as well as effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, are prerequisites for sustained economic and social development. We enourage UNAMA's efforts to promote the rule of law, respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Afghanistan has made progress. However, much remains to be done to consolidate the gains and to create the basis for a lasting transformation. Unity and cooperation within the National Unity Government remain key to the continued development of Afghanistan.

While the Government's agreement with Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) is welcome, increased political dialogue with other insurgent groups is also needed. Sweden underlines the importance of the full implementation of the economic and political reforms pledged by the Government at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan in October.

The sustained engagement of the countries of the region also remains essential to Afghanistan's future. The constructive engagement of regional partners can create a regional environment that is conducive and contributes to security and stability in Afghanistan and in the region more broadly. A peaceful and sustainable Afghanistan should be in everyone's interest. Sweden calls on all actors to take responsibility and to work together towards a sustainable peace.

In 2016, more than a million Afghans returned from Pakistan and Iran. These people are joining those internally displaced in facing the challenging Afghan winter. All actors should support the humanitarian community's efforts to provide life-saving emergency assistance to vulnerable Afghan families over the winter. However, an adequate response plan for returnees is also required, and we urge the Government of Afghanistan to work with UNAMA and others to increase efforts in this regard.

Women's participation in society and in peacebuilding is crucial if Afghanistan is to lift itself out of poverty, war and violence. Sweden welcome's UNAMA's continued efforts to advance Afghan women's equal and full participation in building peace and security within their communities and their country. Excluding half of the population from the peace process is not only wrong, but has been proven to lead to less successful and less sustainable peace agreements.

Ensuring that women can fully play their role in peace and security is a high priority for Sweden. Last week in Kabul, we conducted dialogue and mediation training for women from 32 of the 34 Afghan provinces. This training will continue over the course of the year, with at least two more gatherings. As a member of the Security Council for 2017 and 2018, Sweden will work to advance the women, peace and security agenda on the ground in all country-specific situations on the Council's agenda, including Afghanistan. From 1 January, Sweden will co-chair the Council's informal working group on women, peace and security, together with Uruguay. We look forward to continued interactions with UNAMA also within that forum.

In conclusion, Sweden's support for Afghanistan remains firm. We will continue to work hard for democratic and peaceful development that benefits all of Afghanistan's people.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I should like to express the deepest condolences of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran over the terrorist act committed against the Ambassador of the Russian Federation. While extending our sympathy to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation, I am sure that these barbaric acts only strengthen the political will to fight terrorists and terrorists organizations.

I would like to express my appreciation to Spain for organizing this debate; to the Ambassador of Afghanistan for his statement; to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA); and to the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for their briefings.

The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/1049) once again refers to the further deterioration of the security situation during the reporting period, with the number of armed clashes having increased by 22 per cent over last year, reaching its highest level since the United Nations started recording incidents in 2007 and surpassing the previous record year of 2011. Our region continues to suffer from an alarming surge in extremist violence, while a dramatic increase in drug production is threatening our societies. Afghanistan is most affected by these problems; 2016 has been a very challenging year for the National Unity Government of Afghanistan as extremist groups such as Da'esh expand their terror inside the country.

Today, the Afghan National Unity Government is at the forefront of fighting terrorism. The sustained support of the international community is needed even more to support the Afghan Government in its fight against terrorism and extremism, as well as to address its security, economic and political challenges. We continue to fully support the National Unity Government and we stand ready to work with its leaders to help them discharge their responsibilities. We welcome the recent achievement of the Government in making peace with Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin).

Strengthening our regional cooperation with Afghanistan is a priority and a major pathway to consolidating peace and progress in the region. The trilateral transit agreement between Iran, India and Afghanistan on the development of the port of Chabahar is one important step in that direction. It makes it possible for Afghanistan to have access to world markets, through open seas, making the development of Afghanistan's vast and rich mineral resources economically attractive. We invite interested actors from the region and beyond to consider participating in the development and expansion of Chabahar.

The Khawaf-Herat railway project is another key connectivity project that connects Afghanistan to the international railway network through Iran. We fully share the conclusion by the Secretary-General in his report that regional infrastructure initiatives, including transport links between Afghanistan and Iran and Turkmenistan, serve as an important pathway towards prosperity and stability in Afghanistan.

The challenges facing Afghanistan and our region are interconnected. Recent reports of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime indicate a 43 per cent growth in drug production last year. Without drug proceeds, terrorists cannot finance their operations and drug producers need militias and warlords to traffic their deadly commodity. As a front-line country in the war against narcotics, we have offered alternative cultivation, as well as alternative livelihood plans to dissuade Afghan farmers from opium cultivation. The strong support and commitment of international donors, Afghan authorities and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime are essential to deterring the menace of narcotics as a social health challenge and, more importantly, a major source of income for extremists and terrorist groups.

For the past 37 years, we have hosted no fewer than 3 million Afghan nationals at any given time. They have access to subsidized services available to Iranian nationals, including basic commodities, public transportation, public health and public education. This year alone, we are providing education to nearly 400,000 undocumented Afghan students with minimum burden-sharing assistance from the international community. Iran continues to participate in the work of the Tripartite Commission in order to plan for the voluntary, safe, dignified and gradual repatriation of Afghan refugees. We welcome any effort to help overcome the main reintegration challenges faced by returnees and to formulate the comprehensive voluntary repatriation and reintegration strategy. First and foremost, success in voluntary repatriation depends

on reasonably meeting the needs of repatriated refugees in Afghanistan and underscoring the necessity for mobilizing more international support for that purpose.

We support UNAMA and United Nations agencies in their efforts to provide development and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan. Through genuine commitment by the United Nations to a sustained partnership with Afghanistan, as set forth in the final report of the Tripartite Review Commission on the United Nations in Afghanistan (S/2015/713, annex), we need to utilize the UNAMA mandate and its good offices for strengthening national institutes and capacity in priority areas, as requested by the Government.

Let me conclude by reaffirming the resolve of the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to continue their support for the fraternal people and Government of Afghanistan, as they move through this difficult period in their history to a stable, safe and prosperous Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to remind speakers to limit their statements to four minutes.

I give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): We live in times when the shadow of barbarism is never far from us. That manifests itself sometimes in acts like the one perpetrated today in the dastardly attack on the Russian Federation's Ambassador to Turkey. It is much more manifest at times in what activities are undertaken by designated terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

Therefore, I thank you, Sir, for organizing today's quarterly debate on the situation in Afghanistan. We also thank the three briefers for outlining a diverse array of issues. I take this opportunity to thank the Ambassador of New Zealand, Mr. Gerard van Bohemen, for his stewardship of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), and wish the Permanent Representative of Japan, Ambassador Bessho, all the best as he prepares to take on that chairmanship.

India welcomes the key message of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto, highlighting the positive and supportive role that regional countries and neighbours of Afghanistan need to play. That was never as critical as it is today. Every time we discuss the situation in Afghanistan, we face the dilemma depicted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. While the international community recommits to standing by the Afghan people, the number of casualties among Afghan civilians and security forces keeps rising. While the Taliban sanctions regime has remained split for more than five years, the designated terrorist group makes concerted efforts to capture and hold territory. Therefore, for numerous Afghan women, men and children there is no respite from the plague of terrorism.

We need to ask ourselves whether what we are working on in Afghanistan is the wrong thing to be working on, or whether we are working on it in the wrong way. Since we all agree that supporting the people of Afghanistan is not the wrong thing, then the questions we need to ask ourselves should be related to our ways of going about it. What do we mean when we say that we stand with the Afghan people? Are we doing it in the right way? What is it that we are missing out on?

It is apparent that our efforts at rebuilding institutions, infrastructure and networks in Afghanistan are being undermined, schools are being destroyed, mosques bombarded and religious gatherings targeted. It is also evident that those who perpetrate such heinous crimes have survived and thrived only with support and sanctuaries on the outside.

Experience and academic research provide ample support for the assertion that conflicts in which foreign assistance is available to shadowy entities that fight legitimate State authorities tend to be more severe and last longer than other types of conflict. Therefore, if we are to bring sustainable peace to Afghanistan, groups and individuals that perpetrate violence against the people and the Government of Afghanistan must be denied safe havens and sanctuaries in Afghanistan's neighbourhood. We need to address, as an imperative, the support that terrorist organizations like the Taliban, the Haqqani network, Da'esh, Al-Qaida and its designated affiliates, such as Lashkar-e-Toiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed — which operate entirely outside the fabric of international law — draw from their shadowy supporters outside Afghanistan.

The outcome of the Heart of Asia ministerial meeting held earlier this month in the ancient city of Amritsar was a showing of the commitment of India and the international community to Afghanistan. A key focus during India's co-chairmanship of the Heart of Asia Process has been to bring to centre stage the importance of connectivity for Afghanistan. A well-

connected Afghanistan will be economically vibrant, prosperous and politically stable. A well-connected Afghanistan will have great potential to engage the energies of its youth and attract its talent back from foreign lands. To deny such an opportunity and connectivity to Afghanistan is to deny Afghanistan all the opportunities for prosperity and peace that it entails.

The connectivity that terrorist networks have established needs to be replaced by that of roads, trade networks and ideas for peace and prosperity. We need to remind ourselves of what the great son of Balkhī, the poet Rumi, once said, to the effect that every leaf that grows will reveal that what you sow will bear fruit. Therefore, if you have any sense, he said, do not plant anything but peace.

Afghanistan's National Unity Government has India's full support in strengthening its defence capabilities to fight the terrorism directed against it. We believe that the path to reconciliation in Afghanistan should be through an Afghan-led and an Afghan-owned process in adherence to the internationally accepted red lines, reflecting the aspirations of the people of Afghanistan. The international community also needs to send the right message, making it clear that we will neither roll over in the face of terror nor allow the roll back of the achievements of the resolute people and Government of Afghanistan over the past decade and a half.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Adamson: Before I make my statement, let me express my shock and heartfelt condolences to our Russian colleagues on the murder of their Ambassador.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2016/1049). I also thank Special Representative Yamamoto, the Permanent Representative of New Zealand and Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Afghanistan has made considerable political, security, economic and development progress over the past decade, for which the Government of Afghanistan and the Afghan people deserve much credit. But the gains are fragile and major challenges remain. The international community's support was confirmed in October at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, which reiterated its ongoing commitment to Afghanistan. As noted, the international community pledged $15.2 billion in support of Afghanistan's development priorities for the period 2017-2020. Showcasing its sustained commitment to Afghanistan, the European Union, as a whole, pledged $5.6 billion. Those figures express the continued engagement of the international community in Afghanistan, based on the principle of mutual accountability between the Afghan Government and international donors.

Furthermore, the Conference gave a clear sign of support for the National Unity Government to continue along its reform path, including electoral reforms and reform of the Afghan public administration, economy and governance, including human rights, the rights of women and children and the fight against corruption. As an integral part of the Conference, a high-level event on women's empowerment was organized jointly by the Government of Afghanistan and the EU, which focused on the ways and means of empowering Afghan women to build a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, as well as reinforcing the political and human rights of Afghan women and how to realize those rights in everyday life.

The EU welcomes the priority the Afghan Government has placed on fighting corruption, which remains a major obstacle to development and stability, and stresses the need to further strengthen the efforts in tackling corruption. Positive developments have occurred, but more needs to be done, including at the legislative level. The EU will continue its support in view of achieving progress in that important fight.

The international community expects the Afghan Government to do well on its Brussels commitments. It is important to establish a well-functioning follow-up and progress-tracking mechanism at the country level. We look forward to a first round of high-level stock-taking in about a year. The EU and its member States welcome the appointments of new commissioners to the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan

and the Electoral Complaints Commission, which was an important step to restore public trust in Afghan democratic institutions. While early engagement and assistance to the new electoral institutions are paramount, the EU, together with other international donors, will be attentive to ensuring that any support to the electoral bodies is effectively and sustainably managed. Meaningful electoral reform should lead to an improved periodic electoral process.

We also welcome the recent launching of the Citizens Charter, involving local communities in development processes. We note that national priority programmes on women's economic empowerment are progressing. The European Union has made a clear commitment to the request of the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to its development partners to shift assistance increasingly towards country systems. In that endeavour, we have established a State-building contract as our vehicle to provide direct, on-budget assistance.

On behalf of the EU and its member States, I would like to reiterate that joint State-building and development efforts in Afghanistan can be sustained only if they are built on reinforced regional cooperation. That is why the EU believes that regional forums, such as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process or the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, should be used to facilitate cooperation among all regional actors. In the margins of the Brussels Conference, the EU hosted the a high-level political discussion on Afghanistan with key regional actors. The exchange pointed to an emerging regional consensus to support an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned political process aimed at achieving a negotiated peace settlement in Afghanistan.

Migration continues to represent an important challenge for both the European Union and Afghanistan, which reaffirm the common aim to work together within the United Nations framework to shape a global answer based on solidarity and shared responsibilities. The EU and Afghanistan recently took a joint commitment to stepping up cooperation on addressing and preventing irregular migration, in full respect for international law, including the principle of non-refoulement. The effective and successful implementation of this joint way forward is key. At the same time, the EU continues to pay particular attention to developments regarding the regional dimension of the issue of Afghan refugees. The EU fully supports the principles contained in the Sustainable Development Goals, which foresee the promotion of safe, responsible and orderly migration on the basis of well-managed migration policies.

The number of civilian casualties due to attacks by all fighting parties has reached record numbers again in 2016, with insurgency attacks very often indiscriminately targeting the civilian population and increasingly affecting women and children. The EU condemns those insurgent group attacks, which threaten the stability and progress of Afghanistan. More than ever, we need to continue to protect the vital role of humanitarian agencies and to respect their impartiality and humanitarian space in addressing the most urgent needs of the most vulnerable.

The EU welcomes the undeterred willingness of the Afghan Government to engage with all armed groups in a political process. The only way to a durable end to the conflict in Afghanistan is through a lasting political settlement. After the breakthrough of the Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) peace agreement, for which the Afghan Government deserves credit, it will now be important to implement it and open the way for future peace agreements. The EU remains fully committed to supporting an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process.

It is important that the international community remain strongly committed to accompanying Afghanistan towards long-term progress and stability. The consequences of disengagement should not be underestimated, and we value the critical role of UNAMA in promoting peace and security for all Afghans. From our side, the EU will continue to support the transformation process so as to promote the emergence of a fully self-reliant, peaceful, democratic and prosperous society for the benefit of all Afghans.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Blanchard (Canada): Let me first offer Canada's most sincere condolences to the family of the deceased Russian Ambassador to Turkey, the members of the Russian Federation diplomatic corps, and the Government and the people of the Russian Federation. Our thoughts and prayers are with them, and we all share their pain and sadness.

(*spoke in French*)

I would like to thank the briefers for laying out the multiple and complex challenges facing Afghanistan.

Canada fully supports an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process and acknowledges the efforts made to date by the Government of Afghanistan, despite the formidable challenges that it faces. At the recent Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, Canada renewed its commitment to supporting Afghanistan's ambitions. This year, Canada has committed $465 million for Afghanistan for the period 2017-2020. That sum includes $270 million for development assistance and $195 million in security sector support. Canada will continue to focus on women's and girls' rights in all our health, education and human rights programmes in Afghanistan.

We are pleased to see the Afghan Government's commitment to the peace, stability and progress of the country. We commend the constructive role played by several political leaders in support of the National Unity Government and the progress made in the area of electoral reform. Canada welcomes the peace agreement reached between the Government of Afghanistan and Hezb-i Islami (Gulbuddin). We hope that this agreement will be followed by a series of peace agreements, including with the Taliban. We urge the latter to renounce violence and come to the negotiating table in good faith. A negotiated peace must respect the Afghan Constitution and not be concluded at the expense of the important gains made by and for Afghan women. In that regard, Canada unconditionally supports a meaningful role for women in peace negotiations at all levels and in all areas.

(*spoke in English*)

If those present are to remember only one point from my statement, let it be the role of women in peace negotiations. I must register Canada's deep concern over the continuing deterioration of security in Afghanistan. We are dismayed by the toll on civilians. Their displacement, increased vulnerability and losses are unacceptable. We look to the constructive role that neighbouring countries have offered to play, including in General Assembly resolution 71/9 on Afghanistan and at the sixth Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia. In particular, we call on Afghanistan's neighbours to work with the Government of Afghanistan to better coordinate and manage the return of Afghan refugees.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not also extend Canada's sincere appreciation to the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), Ambassador Gerard van Bohemen. His leadership over the past two years and the Committee's perspectives on how to advance prospects for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan are invaluable. Canada welcomes the recommendations made to further curtail the Taliban's activities. Those include updating and strengthening the implementation of sanctions measures, eliminating revenue flows to the Taliban and engaging closely with the Government of Afghanistan and regional actors. We look forward to working with the incoming Chair, the Ambassador of Kazakhstan, in carrying out those recommendations in order advance peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Canada stands with the Afghan people, especially Afghan women and girls, as they strive for a more secure, prosperous and peaceful future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Wilson (Australia): I join others in expressing our sincere condolences to our Russian colleagues for the sad events of today in Istanbul and for the passing of their Ambassador. I very much sit with others in feeling the weight of that awful situation.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2016/1049) on Afghanistan and all today's briefers.

As 2016 draws to a close, we reflect on a year for Afghanistan of formidable efforts, concrete commitments and sobering challenges. Under the leadership of President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, the National Unity Government continued progress towards improved governance under difficult circumstances. The Government has proven resilient despite the challenges that persist. We urge perseverance in addressing underlying tensions to build on the gains of 2016 and ensure that the National Unity Government remains the sturdy foundation to which the international community looks.

We commend efforts towards an Afghan-led peace process and acknowledge the peace agreement as a historic achievement. Ongoing attention to the success of that deal is crucial as Afghanistan works towards a broader peace process as the sustainable path to security and stability. We are also encouraged by progress in the anti-corruption agenda and the electoral program, and urge attention towards the work that is still to be done on planning for elections in 2017. We also welcome the continued high-level focus on improving gender

equality in Afghanistan and echo the words of the representative of Canada with regard to the importance of such efforts.

The commitments made at the NATO Warsaw Summit and the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan hosted by the European Union demonstrate strong sustained international support for Afghanistan to 2020, despite competing demands for resources and attention in response to crises elsewhere. Regional economic cooperation in support of Afghanistan that has seen Kabul build close relationships and partnerships with neighbours is a welcome development as Afghanistan works towards improving its economic performance. As others have done, we note also the important opportunity provided by the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process to move forward regional dialogue and create opportunities for economic growth. And because external support is necessary but not sufficient, we are glad that the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned National Peace and Development Framework is driving the broader agenda.

Significant challenges remain. Moreover, for Australia, the deteriorating security situation is of particular concern. We see the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces continuing to fight bravely. Australia is committed to maintaining its strong contribution to Afghanistan alongside our international partners. We have extended our deployment of Australian Defence Force personnel to the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission into 2017 and committed $750 million to security-sector sustainment and development over the next four years.

As winter sets in, we are conscious of the great human costs of the ongoing conflict, with women and girls particularly vulnerable. The large number of civilian casualties in 2016 and the growing needs of returning refugees and internally displaced persons highlight the dire humanitarian situation that cannot be ignored. As we look towards 2017, security, governance and the reform agenda will remain key priorities for building Afghanistan. We remain committed to supporting this agenda in close partnership with the Government of Afghanistan, NATO and the international community. We share a collective stake in Afghanistan's future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Begeç (Turkey): At the outset, let me inform the Security Council of our deepest regret and sorrow that the Ambassador of Russia to Turkey, His Excellency Mr. Andrei Gennadyevich Karlov, has lost his life after a gunman's attack in Ankara. We condemn this attack in the strongest possible terms. We also express our condolences to and strong solidarity with the delegation of the Russian Federation here. Turkish authorities will do their utmost to ensure justice, including through a thorough investigation. An official statement concerning this heinous attack will be released in due course by the relevant authorities.

At the outset allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2016/1049), Special Representative Yamamoto for his briefing and Ambassador Saikal for his statement. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/9 on the situation in Afghanistan last month, we welcome this opportunity to discuss developments in the country in the Security Council.

During the past 14 years, Afghanistan has gone through a remarkable transition process and achieved considerable progress in many areas. We welcome the dedication and determination of the Afghan Government, security forces and people in making genuine efforts towards overcoming challenges. Together with the assistance of the international community, Afghanistan is moving forward in the areas of security and development. Today, millions of Afghans have access to education, health and other social services. However, there is still much to do. Accomplishments are still reversible. The security situation is fragile, and Afghanistan remains at a critical juncture.

The NATO Warsaw Summit and Brussels Conference were encouraging. In those meetings, the international community displayed its commitment to support Afghanistan. Continuing this assistance to the security and development efforts of the Afghan Government during the transformation decade will be vital. Afghanistan eventually needs to build its own capacity in many respects. In the meanwhile, we must extend all the help we can to assist the work of achieving a secure, stable and prosperous future for Afghanistan.

The stability of Afghanistan, and subsequently that of the region, will depend on improved security. Lasting peace in Afghanistan can be achieved only through the successful conclusion of the peace and reconciliation process. In that understanding, we welcome the signing

of the peace agreement between the representatives of the Afghan Government and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin).

We welcome and encourage the Afghan Government's efforts to bring reforms to life. We believe that the successful implementation of reforms will bring further political and social cohesion to the country. Turkey will continue to support the Afghan Government in achieving its security and development agenda as long as our help is needed. We will continue our bilateral assistance in the areas of security and development and our contributions to NATO's efforts as a framework nation within the Resolute Support Mission.

Turkey's official development aid to Atghanistan in the period of 2002-2015 exceeded $962 million. It is the single biggest development programme we have ever undertaken. We mainly focus on projects in the fields of education, health, infrastructure and capacity-building for Government institutions. Furthermore, Turkey was pleased to announce during the Brussels Conference our pledge of $150 million for the period 2018-2020.

We believe that genuine dialogue among the countries of the region is particularly important and necessary. In that regard, Turkey will also maintain its contributions to Afghanistan through regional platforms, such as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process. In this regard, we welcome the holding of the sixth Ministerial Conference of the Istanbul Process earlier this month. We are pleased that the Process has provided a foundation to establish interaction among regional countries, supporting countries and organizations. Confidence-building measures in the framework of the Process also represent significant achievements. As one of the co-lead countries of the Counter-Terrorism Confidence-Building Measure Technical Group, Turkey has hosted multiple training activities in 2016. We aim to continue with similar training activities in the upcoming year.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that the Afghan people deserve a better future. The international community's continued commitment will strengthen the hopes of the Afghan people in this regard. It should be our joint duty to help Afghanistan reach that goal.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): (*spoke in Russian*): We very much regret having to start with this very sad duty. I would like to offer our very sincere condolences to our Russian friends in connection with the tragic death of an outstanding diplomat, Mr. Andrey Karlov. We strongly condemn this barbaric act, which has taken place in such a tense period for international relations.

(*spoke in English*)

As per your request, Mr. President, I will skip the complimentary part of my statement. However, the briefers deserve special respect for their performance.

We commend the Government of Afghanistan for its tireless efforts to advance an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. The signing of the peace agreement between the Government and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) set a good example of negotiating peace to other armed groups. The permanent members of the Security Council, Afghanistan's neighbouring countries and regional partners play a crucial role in this process. We express our appreciation for their efforts to genuinely contribute to the peace process in Afghanistan. We also hope that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Islamic Summit Conference, which will be held in Mecca, can make its own contribution.

The illicit production and trafficking of drugs, which is a key source for financing terrorism, poses another great threat not just to Afghanistan, but beyond. Therefore, we will have to adopt a comprehensive approach that encompasses actions in countries of origin, transit and destination with respect to drug consumptiopn. Providing market incentives for cultivating other agricultural products in Afghanistan can lead to a substantial decrease of opium production. We count on the support of the international community in that regard, together with the support of donor countries, to the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre, in its measures to combat illicit narcotics.

Trade, economic and technical cooperation among countries of the region, as well as with regional organizations, is a prerequesite for the economic revival of Afghanistan. The various different transport and infrastructure projects undertaken on a bilteral or multilateral basis have proven to be most valuable. It is important to fully implement assistance programmes and commitments laid out at the Brussels Conference. Likewise, the full implementation of recommendations and commitments emerging from the meeting of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan, held in Amritsar, India, will be equally critical.

The humanitarian situation, which has been aggravated by the recent increase of Afghan refugee returns, poses another grave threat. Therefore, the greater assistance of donor countries, countries of the region and international organizations will be vital to meeting such challenges. Kazakhstan is committed to a peaceful Afghanistan and provides humanitarian aid and technical assistance, as well as an extensive scholarship programme for thousands of Afghan students to study medical science, engineering and public administration in Kazakhstan. In cooperation with Japan and the United Nations Development Programme, we launched the Gender Equality Project, which provides policy support and capacity development for gender equality, in Afghanistan in August. As a new non-permanent member of the Security Council, we will promote security in Afghanistan and the wider region of Central Asia. Kazakhstan will work closely for the effective use of sanctions mechanisms for the benefit of the peace process in Afghanistan.

Finally, I would like to reiterate Kazakhstan's consistent support for Afghanistan and its determination to continue along the path of stability, security and sustainable economic development.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan, who has asked to make another statement.

Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan): I just want to make two points.

First, it is a sad day for diplomacy, as evidenced by the assassination of Ambassador Andrey Karlov, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Turkey. On this occasion, let me extend the deepest condolences on behalf of myself, my Government and the people of Afghanistan to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation, and in particular to the family of Ambassador Karlov. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and with the Government and the people of the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation is a close neighbour to Afghanistan and we have deep ties.

Secondly, let me pay tribute to the work of Ambassador Gerard van Bohemen of New Zealand, who has so ably chaired the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities over the past two years. He has worked with us very closely. I take this opportunity to welcome the new Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, a very close friend and the Ambassador of a near neighbour. I wish him all the best and commit myself to working closely with him to make sure that the sanctions regime will be working properly.

The meeting rose at 1.40 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7845

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7845th meeting

Monday, 19 December 2016, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Martins
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Klein
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Briefings by Chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted

Briefings by Chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by the outgoing Chairs of the subsidiary bodies of the Security Council according to the year of adoption of the related Council resolutions: Ambassador Rafael Ramírez Carreño, Permanent Representative of Venezuela and Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, and Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005)concerning the Sudan; Ambassador Gerard van Bohemen, Permanent Representative of New Zealand and Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, and Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011); Ambassador Ismael Abraão Gaspar Martins, Permanent Representative of Angola and Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa; Ambassador Ramlan Bin Ibrahim, Permanent Representative of Malaysia and Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya, and Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict; and myself, in my capacity as Permanent Representative of Spain and Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), and Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006).

Before giving the floor to Ambassador Ramírez Carreño, on behalf of all members of the Security Council, I would like to express our deepest condolences for the passing today of the Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Ankara. .

I now give the floor to Ambassador Ramírez Carreño.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We associate ourselves with your words of condolences, Mr. President, and we would like to reiterate our deep dismay over the killing of Ambassador Andrey Karlov. We would also like to express all of our solidarity and support to the Russian Federation, its people, its Mission and Government. I would like to draw attention the danger of instigating campaigns of hatred against countries, as was the case with the campaign promoted for political reasons against the Russian Federation. It is a warning to understand that everything that is said and done in relation to a situation so fraught with extremist thinking, such as the situation in Syria, has unfortunate consequences. Therefore, we express our solidarity and will take part in the Security Council initiative to condemn that horrendous assassination.

I thank you, Mr. President, for giving us the floor at the end of our term as a Council members and of our responsibilities in the sanctions committees.

On behalf of our team, I would like to begin my briefing by thanking Mr. Kelvin Ong, Chief of the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch; Ms. Snjezana Gillingham, Secretary of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea; and Ms. Sana Khan, Secretary of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan. We also thank their respective teams for their support over these two years and for their extraordinary work in facilitating our work.

During the period 1991 to 1998, between 500,000 and 2 million people in Iraq were affected by the sanctions regime imposed under the guardianship of a few permanent members of the Security Council. Fortunately, much has changed after the devastating consequences of that sanctions regime. In many respects, the Security Council has learned its lesson, and today the impact of coercive measures on populations is undoubtedly lesser. However, the Council still does not seem to have grasped the notion that the sole objective of sanctions regimes is to contribute to the political solution of a conflict and achieve lasting peace, not to punish a country, whether for revenge or for the specific geostrategic reasons of one of its permanent members.

Our experience as Chair of two sanctions committees has shown us that, despite repeated calls

and questions about the real nature of this instrument, sanctions are still seen as an end in themselves and not a tool to solve political problems and achieve lasting peace. In many cases, the notion prevails that for some permanent members, sanctions are a mere extension of their foreign policy and national interests.

In the final report I presented as Chair of the Sanctions Committee on Somalia and Eritrea, it was clear that the Committee's Monitoring Group had concluded, for the third consecutive year, that there was no indication that Eritrea was collaborating with or supporting Al-Shabaab. On the other hand, it acknowledged, as set out in the Group's final report (S/2016/920), that the cooperation of the State of Qatar in mediating between Djibouti and Eritrea with a view to both resolving the border issue — which is in a signed agreement between the parties — and obtaining the release of a number of prisoners of war. We welcome these advances, which were recognized as a positive element in the operation of the Committee. I understand that Qatar will continue its effective, direct and steady mediation until the resolution of the matter between the two countries.

In any normal situation, those elements would have been enough — perhaps not to lift the sanctions immediately, as that would require more time, but to at least establish a road map for their future lifting. Yet even that could not be achieved. Why? Because the establishment of a road map was obviously inconvenient to the national interests of certain permanent members of the Security Council. Little does it seem to matter in the decisions of the Security Council what Eritrea does, the positive steps it takes or what is contained in the report of the Monitoring Group. I ask, therefore, what is the point of all the meetings and deliberations held by the Committee, if the decision ultimately depends on one or two permanent members? That is an issue that needs to be reviewed.

Regarding the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan , the Chair of that subsidiary body sought to maintain smooth communication with the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Mission in Darfur throughout the two years of our mandate. Special Representative and joint Chief Mediator Martin Ihoeghian Uhomoibhi kept the Committee up to date on the situation on the ground, particularly as it concerned the mandate of that subsidiary body, including with regard to the evolution of the political process in Darfur.

On the other hand, it is worth emphasizing that a fundamental aspect for our delegation has been the improvement of the working methods and transparency of that body. Therefore, at the end of our Sanctions Committee meetings we chose either to issue a press release or to distribute a note verbale to all States Members of the Organization with a brief summary of the meeting. That practice is in accordance with the provisions of the Note by the President S/2016/170, issued on 22 February 2016 under our country's presidency of the Security Council.

Despite these advances, much remains to be done to strengthen the role of the 1591 Sanctions Committee, a subsidiary body which, due to its own dynamics, is often handcuffed and ineffective owing to its politicization, inter alia, by abuse in the use of the rule of consensus. Such abuses during the past 24 months led to the Committee being prevented from submitting its quarterly report in an open format, in this very Chamber, to the entire membership of the Organization. Similarly, the Committee was unfortunately affected by relative inactivity for approximately six months due to an inability to reach consensus on the membership of the Panel of Experts. The same occurred in the delay in the issuance of the final report of the Panel of Experts, available since December 2015 but only published in September this year.

During this period, the Committee did not have the opportunity to receive information on the situation on the ground. While the Committee should not always agree with the Panel's evaluations, the information it provides is certainly very useful for its deliberations. In that connection, we emphasize that the Panel of Experts is an independent entity in its work and must operate strictly under the principles of impartiality and objectivity. In short, the information provided by the Panel of Experts to the Committee should be purely technical so that the latter may do the political evaluation and the respective decision-making as it considers necessary.

We once again express our solidarity with our African brothers, who are the targets of more than 70 per cent of the sanctions regimes of the Security Council. That is disconcerting and has no reason to be, especially when the sponsors and drafters of resolutions are precisely those who were the ones to colonize these countries. This is a subject matter for reflection and open debate. Those of us from Latin America and the Caribbean will continue to work to the best of our

ability to promote political solutions, motivated and grounded in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, to all of these terrible conflicts that affect our sister countries.

It is curious, however, that those who stand as strong human rights defenders use sanctions regimes to punish the peoples and Governments who are the objects of such coercive measures. These sanctions regimes infringe on elementary human rights by depriving their citizens of basic health and food needs. Likewise, those in favour of sanctions apply restrictive policies on migration to prevent citizens who are victims of armed conflict and extreme poverty from crossing borders in search of a better life.

How do we explain the fact that nations of the developed world that are members of the Council have refused to welcome more than 1,500 Syrian refugees? Meanwhile, Lebanon, a country of 4.5 million people, is sheltering more than 1.7 million Syrian refugees, equivalent to 28 per cent of the country's total population. That does not include the 300,000 Palestinian refugees who have been living in Lebanon for decades. We wonder why those countries are reluctant to respond to the legitimate causes of self-determination of the Palestinian and Saharawi peoples. Why does their suffering not deserve the same attention? What about the massacre of the Yemeni people and the invasion of Iraq and Libya and their devastating consequences?

The deaths of millions of innocent people, including hundreds of thousands of children and women; the unprecedented expansion of terrorism; violence and organized crime in the Middle East and North Africa; and one of the greatest waves of forced migration in the history of mankind are being ignored. Where are the sanctions regimes imposed on the States — on all States, without double standards — that commit flagrant violations of international law? In light of our consideration of the role of sanctions committees, and bearing in mind the similar assessments of them by other chairs of subsidiary bodies, it would be advisable for the Council to consider giving the chairs greater freedom in the preparation and issuance of reports to prevent their possible blocking through the abusive application of the consensus rule.

We also propose the establishment of the post of ombudsman to examine with greater justice and due process the inclusion on or exclusion from the sanctions list of persons or entities that are linked to a conflict situation. Furthermore, we recommend that the Security Council end its dangerous trend of controlling the management of natural resources of sanctioned countries. That also applies to aspects related to finances, budgets and all other decisions of countries concerned. We also suggest that the Council continuously consult with countries of the region, neighbours of the States under a sanctions regime, as they can play a positive role in achieving a solution, bearing in mind that at the same time, those countries are also affected by the adverse consequences resulting from sanctions. The experience in these committees has highlighted the need to address those matters in public meetings of the Security Council, with the participation of the States concerned.

Of equal relevance is the establishment of specified limits for the duration of the work of the committee, considering that we cannot place a country under a sanctions regime indefinitely, without taking into account the cooperation of that State and the opinions of the groups of experts. In that regard, we should avoid the biased use of the assessments of the groups of experts by some permanent members that sometimes accept or reject, as convenient, the points of view and guidelines of the panels of experts that assist the committees. What is required in sanctions cases is constant review to help the country to achieve an end to the conflict, and not to supervise the country or to administer it under a permanent sanctions regime.

From the very outset, Venezuela took on the intensive work in the framework of the Council's agenda with a sense of utmost responsibility and a constructive attitude. That led us to take positions on matters of vital importance for today's world, matters that require the international community's urgent attention with a view to peacefully resolving the armed conflicts and the situations of poverty and fear of millions of people around the world. We were, and are, always ready to condemn the structural causes of conflicts, such as poverty and social exclusion, to help achieve real and sustainable solutions to such problems.

Respect for the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples as a principle, denouncing the real causes of the crisis of refugees and migrants, the growing expansion of terrorism and its promoters, induced wars, preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding in post-conflict areas, the role of regional organizations, disarmament, the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to their free self-determination, the Saharawi

cause, the war against the Syrian people: among many current affairs of crucial importance, these were the pillars of our actions during the last two years, both in public positions and in negotiations. Throughout, we embraced the principles of the Bolivarian foreign policy that was promoted by President Chavez, such as solidarity, integration and the vision of the countries of the South. I am proud to say today that the work has been completed, also thanks to the tireless efforts and professionalism of a committed working team that, with the support of those present, was able to complete the ambitious task.

We speak out on important global problems that many others, with significant power and influence, ignore. At the same time, we contribute in a modest and dignified fashion from our position, reaffirming the importance of promoting a more just and inclusive world, a more democratic United Nations and a Security Council that can, many times, truly fulfil its role in peacefully resolving conflicts that compromise international peace and security.

The United Nations is entering a crucial stage next year, both for the importance of making real progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the very serious humanitarian and security crises that are unfolding. At the same time, with António Guterres assuming the position of Secretary-General — and we wish him the best of luck in the upcoming years — we hope that there will be an effective improvement in the working methods of this Organization, in particular of the Security Council, for the sake of greater transparency and democratization. In that connection, a thorough review of the performance of the sanctions committees, as soon as possible, is needed.

Very briefly, I would like to mention a few pending tasks of the Security Council. Complying with the responsibility of this organ to maintain international peace and security means that we must draw attention to those unresolved cases that require decisive and urgent action by the Council.

The Palestinian issue and the colonial situation of Western Sahara must no longer be silenced conflicts in the Council, products of the policy of double standards. It is necessary for the Council to speak out once and for all through a resolution on ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and its related policies with a view to this body complying with its mandate of effectively contribute to the achievement of the two-State solution, where Palestine and Israel can live side by side in peace, within the pre-1967 internationally safe and recognized borders.

In the case of Western Sahara, the last colony in Africa, there must be an end to the practice that prevents the consideration of that important matter in a public meeting, with a view to promoting a broad discussion — which happens with other issues — that would push the Council to move towards a referendum on self-determination, as established by resolution 690 (1991), with the support of the United Nations and the African Union, to enable the Saharawi people to freely choose their future.

On another line of thought, we call on the Council to avoid the harmful trend of dealing with items that fall outside of its purview and correspond to other bodies, in particular to the General Assembly.

The Security Council must stay vigilant, given the very serious conflicts that are impacting the regions of North Africa and the Middle East. It must promot political and peaceful solutions to the armed conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Libya. Such conflicts stem from interventism and military aggression that provoke destabilization through the proliferation of terrorist groups that are used to overthrow Governments. All of that is to the detriment of the human rights of the people of those countries — the men, women, young people and children who are suffering the consequences of those terrible conflicts and awaiting proper action from this Council, in keeping with its mandate, and who want to be taken into account.

To conclude, we would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts in promoting the objectives of the Organization in the sphere of international peace and security and the development of human rights. We would also like to thank the representatives of the members of the Security Council and their respective teams for the working relationship that we have built over the last two years. Despite our diverging, and sometimes even conflicting, points of view, respect prevailed for the people and the countries they represent.

Lastly, we extend our acknowledgement to all the Member States that accompanied us without fail and in the spirit of solidarity, the Secretariat staff and the support staff of the Security Council, with whom we developed a very fluid and constructive cooperation.

We thank the Organization and the membership from here forward, keeping open the doors to our country and to our Permanent Mission and giving our enduring support as we enter into a new agenda of commitments in favour of social struggles, the fight against poverty and the true democratization of the Organization.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Ramírez Carreño for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Van Bohemen.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I welcome the opportunity to discuss this important and often overlooked aspect of the Council's work: the work of our subsidiary bodies.

As an elected member for the past two years, New Zealand has been an active participant in the subsidiary bodies of the Council, including as Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011). I have been honoured to chair those sanctions committees. I have been frank about my experiences as Chair, and I will continue in that spirit today, focusing on two working methods areas: the effectiveness of our sanctions committees, and the preparation of and process for appointing Chairs.

But as a first order of business, I record my thanks and appreciation to the Committee's Monitoring Team, the Ombudsperson and the Secretariat staff for their hard work and support.

On effectiveness, one thing that has struck me is how little consideration or priority the Council gives to ensuring that its sanctions committees are effective. Sanctions are one of the few tools we have, short of force, to respond to situations that threaten international peace and security. Yet the way these committees are established and the procedures under which they operate mean they struggle to discharge their mandates effectively.

First, we silo those bodies away from the Council's work and from each other. It would seem logical that when there is a country-specific item in our programme of work regarding a country where there is also a sanctions regime, we should discuss the two together, and indeed we did that this morning. It would seem sensible that where there is a field mission operating where there is also a sanctions regime, the two would be reinforcing and we should discuss them as such. It would also seem reasonable that when the Council discusses items like the threat from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, we could have the coordinator of the Monitoring Team in the room to brief us and field questions. Yet, making any suggestions for improvement in that area very often encounters active resistance, usually from a permanent member.

Secondly, we have allowed the process of those Committees to get in the way of their outcomes. Process is important, but it should not obstruct our primary goal as a Council or the discharge of our obligations under Chapter VII resolutions. That is most clearly illustrated by the requirement — I hesitate to call it a rule because it has no basis in the Charter — that any Committee decision, no matter how minor, must be taken by consensus. My colleague Ambassador Ramírez Carreño also referred to that point in his remarks.

What we have done, in fact, has been to confer the right of veto on all Council members, and that right extends to all decisions — procedural and substantive — no matter how minor. In my opinion, that is the single biggest inhibitor to Committee effectiveness. Around this table, we can share endless examples of that, but I will highlight just a few that have arisen in the Committees that I have chaired, where the consensus rule has prevented what I consider to be obviously sensible decisions.

First, we have been unable to update the details of the deceased former Taliban leader on our sanctions list so that we can stop his considerable assets ending up in the hands of the Taliban. Today, I am deeply concerned after learning that the compromise proposal we have worked on for so many weeks has not been accepted. We have been unable to take practical steps to put the Office of the Ombudsperson on a more secure and independent footing, despite the clear directions in resolution 2253 (2015), adopted last year. So far, we have been unable to update our Committee's guidelines to help serve our effective functioning.

In the course of the past year, we have seen attempts to extend the no-objection procedure — in other words, the 15-country veto — to even more minor matters including, incredibly, my ability as Chair to invite Committee members to an informal meeting in my own Mission. I am yet to hear any convincing reason for the Council's subsidiary bodies operating under a far

more restrictive set of rules than those that apply to the Council itself under the Charter or under its provisional rules of procedure. That is particularly true in view of the reality that it is almost invariably a permanent member that uses the no-objection procedure to block a decision.

I am not cavilling because New Zealand is an elected member, while others are permanent. My objection is that that procedure allows members — usually permanent members — to play politics, either on their own account or on behalf of others, to obstruct the effective functioning of a regime that all United Nations Members are required to comply with. That erodes confidence in the sanctions regime and in the Council itself.

On how the Council appoints its chairs, I am pleased that the elected members have worked together to secure improvements to the process this year. No longer is that an intra-permanent five decision; it is now a process facilitated by two Council members, including an elected member. No longer will elected members be told which Committee they can chair just a few days before they start their Council term. They will now have time to prepare for the significant responsibilities of being a subsidiary body Chair. That said, there is still room for further improvement in our view. In closing, I would like to offer five recommendations to the Council:

First, I would urge Council members to think about how we do our business and the small, practical steps we can take to be more efficient, avoid duplication and maximize the tools we have. That includes more coherent scheduling of our Council programmes of work and requesting that the Secretary-General report on sanctions in his reports, where applicable.

Secondly, when Chairs do brief in closed consultations, we should reconsider the use of formulaic statements approved by the Committee. The substance and utility of our conversations would improve vastly if Chairs were instead able to come with a couple of points for discussion that they had formulated themselves.

Thirdly, we must have a serious conversation about the decision-making of our Committees, with a view to reform.

Fourthly, the burden of chairing subsidiary bodies should be spread to all Council members. We are a Council not of 5 or 10, but of 15, and chairing should reflect that.

Fifthly, the elected members must continue to support each other as Chairs. New Zealand established an informal group of chairing experts that meets semi-regularly, and last week we hosted a workshop on the practicalities of chairing for incoming members. We hope elected members will keep those alive next year.

None of these recommendations require a new resolution or presidential statement; they require courage and behavioural change, and I believe that the whole Council would be better for it.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Van Bohemen for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Martins.

Mr. Martins (Angola): Let me also join you, Mr. President, in reiterating the condolences of the Council over the occurrence in Ankara this afternoon, which caused the death of the Russian Ambassador to Turkey.

We thank you, Mr. President, for giving us the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the activities of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa. I would also like to acknowledge the strong support that we have received from the Secretariat regarding the work of the Committee, especially the participation of Mr. James Sutterlin, who has been Secretary for the Working Group.

As decided by the Council, the Ad Hoc Working Group has served as the forum through which the Security Council has prepared the joint session of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. The Working Group discussed the programme, the draft agenda and the joint communiqué issued after the informal meeting of the joint session, which took place on 23 May.

The Group was to address two points on its agenda. Unfortunately, we could not agree on the inclusion of specific points raised by the African Union, in particular the inclusion of the question of the situation of Western Sahara. During the informal consultations, the Peace and Security Council expressed its concern for the rejection of the proposal of items of the African Union in the agenda. That affected the good work of the joint session, especially considering that conflicts

in Africa are very much on the agenda of the Security Council.

Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, the African Union Peace and Security Council did not until recently respond to our repeated communications regarding the latest version of the draft joint communiqué discussed in New York on 23 May, which contained several outstanding issues. These developments are worrying signs for the future of the Security Council's engagement with the Peace and Security Council, which is its main partner in matters related to peace and security in Africa. As our successor now takes over and prepares for the eleventh joint session, which will take place in Addis Ababa, those matters should be carefully addressed.

The second focus of activity this year was a meeting on improving the cooperation between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Security Council in sustaining peace in Africa. This meeting was based upon the adoption of resolution 2282 (2016), in which the Council expressed an intent to regularly request, deliberate and draw upon the specific strategic and targeted advice of the Peacebuilding Commission. This was a remarkable development, as it will definitely make the Peacebuilding Commission a very important body in the work of the Council.

The discussion afforded the members of the Working Group an opportunity to evaluate how we can enhance the relationship between the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, assess how the Peacebuilding Commission can be more relevant to the work of the Security Council, taking into account its bridging role, and contribute to overcoming a problem that has been detected — the lack of synchronization or the existence of the silo mentality — which has been identified as one of the problems affecting the work of the United Nations.

We recommend that the annual programme of the Ad Hoc Working Group include peacebuilding and sustaining peace thematics. We further recommend that the choice of the thematics be proposed by the Chair following consultations with relevant structures of the Secretariat. This is also in line with resolution 2282 (2016).

To conclude, we would like to thank the members of the Ad Hoc Working Group and the Secretariat for their invaluable contributions in supporting the work of the Chair. We also convey our best wishes to our successor in the chairmanship of the Working Group .

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Gaspar Martins for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006).

In the exercise of the chairmanship of three committees on non-proliferation, Spain had always made clear that its main role was to search for consensus. As the main drivers in this task, we have acted responsibly and, above all, transparently. For that, we always counted on the cooperation of the members of the Council. I thank them for their support and the manner in which they helped us to solve problems.

Now, there are three ideas that, in my opinion, would contribute to improving the effectiveness of the Committees.

The first is relevance. I believe that formalisms should be avoided in Security Council meetings, where there should be greater focus on discussion and analysis of relevant issues. I believe that briefings to the Council by the President should avoid the mechanical reading of a previously circulated text that is sometimes incomprehensible, not just for non-experts but also for the Chairs of the Committees themselves. The briefings should therefore be simple and allow for a substantive debate.

The second is transparency. Transparency is essential in the actions of the Committees and in reflecting their decisions, particularly in the area of sanctions. States should be able to understand, with simple and complete clarity, the obligations they must fulfil. I therefore welcome the progress made by the Secretariat in the management of the Committees' websites.

The third is unity. The Council must act united in both the adoption and implementation of the resolutions. Ambiguous clauses should be avoided, which create uncertainties and make implementation difficult.

To those three I would add a fourth. I fully endorse the five proposals that the Ambassador of New Zealand put forward and which seem to me to be perfect, and of the five, I would emphasize one in particular: the way in

which the need to get 15 votes in favour, which in the end turns the Committees into gatherings of 15 delegations each with a right of veto, makes decision-making in the Committees difficult.

I shall now briefly refer to specific issues in the three Committees I have chaired: the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006), the 1718 Committee and the 1540 Committee.

With respect to the 1737 Committee, my greatest joy was to see it disappear in January. The signing of the nuclear agreement in 2015, thanks to the efforts of many, made it possible for diplomacy to triumph. I am confident that the full implementation of resolution 2231 (2015) will allow this matter to be definitively resolved.

With respect to the 1718 Committee, it was always clear that the sanctions are directed exclusively against the military nuclear programme and ballistic missiles, not against the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It was this that led to the Council adopting resolutions 2270 (2016) and 2321 (2016), and we have always made sure that we do not affect the humanitarian situation.

In the coming months, there remains much to do, and I am sure that the Italian presidency will do it brilliantly. For example, if I might make a recommendation, it would be useful to have an open briefing on resolution 2321 (2016). It is necessary for the various aspects of the implementation of a resolution as complex as resolution 2321 (2016) to be explained to the members of the United Nations.

Obviously, I have failed in my efforts to see the 1718 Committee disappear, but I do not lose hope that this will happen in the near future. It is in the hands of Pyongyang to return to international legality and bring about an end to the sanctions. As always, I have confidence in the way of diplomacy and in dialogue.

With respect to the 1540 Committee, little needs to be added. The activities over the last two years have been intense. We worked hard on the global review and a few days ago we adopted, under the presidency of my Minister for Foreign Affairs, resolution 2325 (2016), which updates resolution 1540 (2004), while maintaining its cooperative and preventive approach. I would like to thank all the members of the Security Council for their help in this effort.

Finally, I offer a word of final thanks, making special mention of those who have been our "family" in the management of the Committees: the Security Council Affairs Division, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the 1540 Committee Panel of Experts and the 1718 Committee Panel of Experts. Without them, from their Directors or Coordinators, to the officials who took care of the correspondence or the web page, we would not have been able to carry out our task. They were our eyes and our ears. With professional rigour and patience, they were able to advise, inform or support us. We will miss them all, as we will miss our colleagues in the Security Council. And we will support all of them from the other side of this table.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Ibrahim.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): I thank you, Mr. President, for providing this opportunity for the outgoing Security Council members to reflect on our work in leading the Council's subsidiary bodies over the past two years. Malaysia has had the honour of chairing the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict as well as the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya. I would like to share some observations gathered in the course of our tenure, beginning with the Working Group.

The magnitude of the Council's responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security is never more deeply felt than when we consider the devastating impact of armed conflict on children. The past two years have unfortunately seen a grave deterioration in the situation of children in many countries affected by conflict, as well as unprecedented trends and challenges related to ensuring their protection. In undertaking the responsibility of chairing the Working Group and tackling its challenges, Malaysia has focused on strengthening the normative framework of the Council's agenda on children and armed conflict, as well as mainstreaming the issue of child protection into its wider work. Where possible, we have also continued the tradition of innovative approaches that characterized the spirit of the Working Group when it was first created.

During our presidency in June 2015, with regard to strengthening the agenda's normative framework, the Council adopted resolution 2225 (2015), which introduced child abduction as a fifth trigger for listing in the annex to the Secretary-General's report, along with

children's recruitment and use; killing or maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence against children; and attacks on schools and hospitals. It therefore expanded the tools available to enable the Security Council and the United Nations to address grave violations against children, including those committed by non-State armed groups.

During Malaysia's two years at the helm of the Working Group, we adopted conclusions on the situation of children in armed conflicts in South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Central African Republic, in accordance with the Working Group's mandate, as established in resolution 1612 (2005). In coming up with recommendations for parties to conflicts and child protection actors for each specific country situation, we were cognizant of the lack of a mechanism for regular follow-up on the implementation of conclusions documents. As a result, all of the Working Group's conclusions incorporate provisions that encourage sustained engagement in child protection efforts with concerned Member States and international actors, including the donor community. While we did not have the chance to conduct follow-up engagement during our term, we hope that this will create a foothold for future Chairs to build on in ensuring the effective implementation of Working Group conclusions.

We also strove to continue the efforts of our predecessors to ensure that child protection concerns are sufficiently mainstreamed into the wider work of the Council, including in the establishment and renewal of United Nations peace operations mandates. The establishment of child protection capacity in United Nations missions through the appointment of advisers has been a critical development in strengthening the implementation of the agenda on children and armed conflict. It is therefore imperative that child protection advisers continue to be given an effective mandate and allocated the resources they need to carry out their crucial work in the field.

Similarly, we emphasized the important role of the relevant Sanctions Committees in using sanctions designations to hold accountable those responsible for violations and abuses against children, including the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. In that regard, we have continued to support the sharing of information with relevant Sanctions Committees, including through periodic briefings, by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

We further pioneered the practice of inviting the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to provide joint briefings to the Working Group and the relevant Sanctions Committees as part of efforts to promote understanding and collaboration on the complementary work of the subsidiary bodies. We believe that this platform for cross-fertilization between subsidiary bodies on the issue of child protection can be further explored. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and her Office, and to UNICEF, for their tireless dedication and commitment to upholding the protection and rights of children. I would also like to pay tribute to all the United Nations child protection advisers and the other United Nations officials and personnel who implement its agenda on children and armed conflict on the ground, as well as to civil society actors. Although our term in the Council has come to an end, our solidarity with and commitment to this important agenda will continue.

I now turn to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya. Since I briefed the Council in my capacity as Chair of the Committee just two weeks ago (see S/PV.7827), I do not intend to elaborate too much on the details of its work.

In the past two years, during Malaysia's chairmanship of the Committee, Libya has been through very challenging times. The political scene has been split, and most of the first half of our tenure as Chair of the Committee saw the parties working to negotiate the Libyan Political Agreement. Even after the adoption a year ago of the Political Agreement, and since the Presidency Council's arrival in Tripoli, the process of establishing a Government of National Accord is still not complete. The work of the Committee over this period has therefore had to be balanced carefully and delicately in order to ensure that in 2015 the sanctions regime did not interfere with the political process, and in 2016 that it supported the establishment of a Government of National Accord.

Accordingly, while the issues before the Committee during 2015 were evenly distributed, there was a significant increase in the second half of 2016, mostly in requests for guidance on the measures' scope. In that regard, the Committee issued one additional Implementation Assistance Notice, and also incorporated updates to such notices twice in 2016. They are aimed at providing greater clarity for

the relevant sanctions measures, as well as at assisting Member States in discharging their obligations to implement Security Council resolutions on Libya.

Over the course of 2015 and 2016, the Committee has kept a close eye on the arms embargo and particularly on movements of arms and military materiel into Libya, as well as the risk of diversions. One of the most notable changes to the sanctions regime has been the authorization permitting Member States to interdict vessels on the high seas believed to be violating the arms embargo. Despite the Committee's efforts, the embargo continues to be violated, with reports of increases in the flow of arms and military materiel and the presence of mercenaries and foreign military forces in Libya, as well as foreign air strikes.

Another key aspect of the Committee's work was the assets-freeze measures, aimed at protecting Libya's public assets in order to ultimately make them available to the Libyan people. Similarly, the Committee remains committed to the protection of Libya's natural resources in the same cause. In that regard, the listing and subsequent delisting of the vessel *Distya Ameya* was a success story that demonstrated the Committee's resolve to support the Government of National Accord and ensure that Libya's natural resources are used for the Libyan people. Here I would like to highlight the tremendous contribution and relentless efforts of the Committee's Panel of Experts. It has been a vital component of the Committee's work, particularly in monitoring and enhancing the implementation of the relevant sanctions measures. As a result, the Committee has consistently taken action to follow up on the Panel's recommendations. I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation and gratitude to the Panel of Experts for their excellent work in that regard.

Moving forward, we would like to encourage the new Chair to continue pursuing the possibility of organizing a visit to Libya, given the appropriate timing and conditions. It is unfortunate that none of the Chairs of the Committee, including me, have been able to undertake such a visit since the Committee was established in 2011. At the same time, engagements with regional partners and the international community should continue to be strengthened. In supporting the Libyan-led transition, regional partners and the international community must work hand in hand and live up to their responsibilities and obligations by respecting and implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions. Regional partners and the international community should also assist and cooperate with the Libyan authorities, particularly in the current climate in which the Libyans lack the means to do so.

Finally, I wish to express our heartfelt appreciation to all of the members of the Committee for their cooperation, the Panel of Experts for their contributions and especially to the Subsidiary Organs Branch for their invaluable assistance and depth of knowledge. I also thank the wider United Nations membership for the support and cooperation during the two years of my country's chairmanship.

To conclude, I should like to assure the delegation of Sweden, which will succeed Malaysia as Chair of both the Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya, of our full cooperation and best wishes for success in 2017.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I sincerely thank the outgoing Chairs for their briefings, in particular those who made a valiant effort to adhere to the five-minute time limit.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.